

Secrets of SHREK | Women of ANDROMEDA

# CINEFANTASTIQUE®

June

**SPRING SWEATS**

**TOMB  
RAIDER**

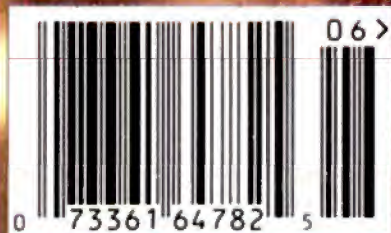
**-VS-**

**THE  
MUMMY  
RETURNS**

*How Two  
Studios Doubled  
Up the ACTION*

*THE BIRDS  
DINOTOPIA  
ANGRY KID  
SPECIAL UNIT 2*

Volume 33 Number 3



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# BUTTERFIELDS

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VOLUME 33 NUMBER 3

"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

JUNE, 2001

Just so we aren't misunderstood, we have absolutely no objections to a studio making great honkin' wads o' money off a film. All we ask is that we get something in return—if not genuine, intellectual stimulation, at least a couple of hours of good fun; something to leave us feeling that our investment in a ticket and a five-dollar box of Junior Mints wasn't grievously misspent.

Universal pretty much delivered a decent return on investment with 1999's *THE MUMMY*. Sure, it wasn't *CITIZEN KANE*—Hell, it was barely *INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE*—but it was neatly constructed, nimbly directed, and packed with tons of juicy ILM effects. Now, as Douglas Eby discovers in his feature article on *THE MUMMY RETURNS*, the big trick for all on the inside is to net the same crowds while packing in enough twists to ensure that this follow-up doesn't fall victim to the most prevalent malady of the sequel: retread disease.

Paramount, meanwhile, can't be blamed for wanting a healthy wedge of that action-adventure pie. Their solution: Follow hard on the heels of Universal's desert romp with a dark trek into the jungles with Lara Croft, a.k.a. *TOMB RAIDER*. We had Alan Jones tracking this one—his comprehensive coverage may give some hint whether, in the age of *CHARLIE'S ANGELS*, a buxom, video-game-bred adventuress can trump a mouldering mummy.

No surprise that Jeffrey Katzenberg has gone his own way. He's proud about *SHREK*—the CG animated feature that pokes fun at the hoariest conventions of animated story-telling. He should be. While the story-telling is not as subtly layered as what John Lasseter has achieved in his two *TOY STORIES*, *SHREK* knows a good laugh when it sees one, and has managed to snare a few fall-out-of-your-chair guffaws in the process. Ross Plesset's exclusive feature delves into both the textual and technical details of this unique film.

Summer begins. Where will you spend *your* money?

—Dan Persons



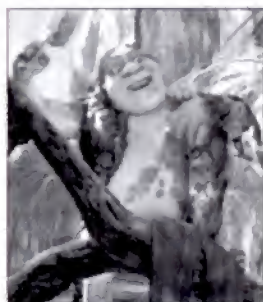
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## YOU KNOW YOU'RE A FANBOY IF...

### JAY AND SILENT BOB STRIKE BACK (Dimension)

The logo is a neat takeoff on the STAR WARS original and it's coming out from Miramax's genre division, but frankly, that's the only guarantee we've got that this film, featuring Kevin Smith's all-purpose second bananas/Greek chorus/freelance prophets, will actually be a genre effort. What we do know is that this is a road trip movie that has something to do with the shooting of a film version of the fictional comic book *Bluntman and Chronic*. Comic fans will no doubt pick out tons of in-jokes that the unconverted will just have to suss out the best they can (hmm...sounds like DOGMA all over again).

August 10

### JURASSIC PARK III (Universal)

July 18

Even if Joe Johnston's last experience with rampaging CG beasts was JUMANJI, we still look forward to discovering if this frequently underrated director can pull off a more bracing sequel than JP II. The cast at least has potential: Sam Neil, Laura Dern, Tea Leoni, William H. Macy, and Michael Jeter. Did they somehow get diverted from their next indie gig?

### PLANET OF THE APES (Fox)

July 27

Tim Burton is the master of the fish-out-of-water scenario, and yet we're not sure about how exactly he clicks into this radical reenvisioning of the '60s camp classic. Mark Wahlberg, Kris Kristofferson, and Estella Warren are the humans; Tim Roth, Helena Bonham Carter, and Michael Clarke Duncan go into monkey-master Rick Baker's costumes. Even Charlton Heston gets a walk-on as a chimpanzee. Now, Burton directing Heston...that's something we'll pay good money to see.

### OSMOSIS JONES (Warner Bros.)

August 10

Ominous rumbles on the grapevine: Warners seems to be planning the IRON GIANT treatment—i.e. bouncing a film into limited release with only token promotional support—for this intriguing-sounding, mostly-animated tale of all-out war in the human body. Lots of talent is plowed into this puppy, from the Farrelly brothers directing Bill Murray and Chris Elliot in the live action sequences, voice-over work by Chris Rock, David Hyde Pierce, and Laurence Fishburne; and animation direction from the notable team of Piet Kroon and Tom Sito. Maybe Warners should address the problem where it really lies and find a marketing department that knows how to sell product.



# CFQ PREVIEW

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Dan Persons

### ROLLERBALL (MGM)

August 17

Continuing on rumor-patrol: Lots of bad buzz is preceding this remake of the '70s Roman-Arena-in-the-Corporate-Controlled-Future scenario. Yet, John McTiernan's description of a grittier vision for the film (see page 6) has us curious about whether this version might be more palatable than the overblown, pretentious original. Chris Klein, LL Cool J, and Rebecca Romijn-Stamos star.

### SOUL SURVIVORS (Artisan)

August 24

And the FINAL DESTINATION knock-off season officially begins with this tale of a teenager (Melissa Sagemiller) who survives a car crash and is haunted by visions of her now-dead boyfriend. All those people who worked on the I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER look-alikes need some sort of gainful employment, I guess.

### JOHN CARPENTER'S GHOSTS OF MARS (Screen Gems)

August 24

Can John Carpenter avoid the pitfalls that scuttled such previous Red Planet projects as MISSION TO MARS and, uh, RED PLANET? Maybe. Word is he's harkening back to such landmark projects as ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13, concentrating less on the how-we-gonna-get-there aspects and more on human dynamics as a group of diverse colonists (Natasha Henstridge, Ice Cube, Pam Grier (YYYYESSSS!!)) struggle to survive against a Martian-built alien-extermination system. This is being described as a space western, and God knows if anybody has a knack for the form, it's Carpenter.

### CLOCKSTOPPERS (Paramount)

Summer

...or, "Honey, I Sped Up the Kids." A scientist zaps a couple of children (Jesse Bradford, Miko Hughes) with a ray that accelerates their perceptions of time, making everything else seem to be standing still. Most interesting thing about this Nickelodeon project is the director: Jonathan Frakes, making this the first non-TREK theatrical feature he's helmed.

## SYNTH-ACTOR ALERT

### FINAL FANTASY: THE SPIRITS WITHIN (Columbia) July 11

Following up on TOMB RAIDER in the quest for a respectable vid-game port-over comes this all-CG production. Major bragging point: The effort invested in creating 100% realistic actors to populate a story of near-future war against alien forces. As SHREK has already proven, the development curve is rapidly accelerating; whether it makes the story any more compelling remains to be seen.



## VOYAGER ACTORS FACE THEIR FUTURES

*Series Ends, But Franchise Lives On*

by Frank Barron

After seven years of sailing through the universe, STAR TREK VOYAGER completed its long run on UPN television, the last episode airing on May 23rd. Producer Rick Berman has said that a new TREK is in preparation, but when it will hit the airwaves is still to be determined.

But what about the cast of VOYAGER? What will they be doing? Where in time or space will they be heading?

"Captain" Kate Mulgrew thought "The toughest part was leaving after seven years, and knowing I may not see some of my fellow actors again." As for herself, "I'll be doing a movie in England in the spring, then when I come back to the States, I'll be moving to New York and also building a home in Cleveland."

Robert Picardo, the ship's doctor, admitted, "It was a great family atmosphere. I never had a job this long. It's unusual for an actor to have a job that lasts seven years." As for his future? He had no idea what he would be doing next—a typical actor's plaint.

Garrett Wang could only conjecture on his future. Jeri Ryan, the shapely Seven of Nine, refused to discuss the future, and did not wish to look back. "I'm a crybaby," she confessed.

Tim Russ—the Vulcan Tuvok—knows he will be involved in film and music projects, "and have a chance to do things I haven't had the time do in seven years. I can cut loose and be involved in some production aspects, plus music projects and a stage play. But I will definitely miss the crew that we worked with, and the cast. I had the chance to work with them, to clown with them, and goof off and have fun and laugh. It was a great cast and crew to work with."

Roxann Dawson will miss "having a job that I can depend on as an actor. We are sort of gypsies—used to going from role to role, from show to show. This has been



**VOYAGER VALEDICTORY:** After seven years and more than a few dissatisfied rumblings from the devoted, the cast of STAR TREK VOYAGER returns to the down-to-Earth task of looking for their next jobs.

an elaborate luxury, to be able to have a job for this long. I don't think it will happen again. That I will miss."

Robert Beltran said he would recall that, "We all had a great relationships with each other, and how much we enjoyed our crew—a terrific crew. I'm going to miss doing scenes on the bridge the most, but I'm looking forward to what's next. It's been great having a gig for seven years."

Ethan Phillips will miss the craft services, "The only place where you can have free donuts and coffee. This group has been extraordinary. We were all very good friends. It's been a joy to be with them and the crew and everybody. I will miss going to this virtual home every day. It's been very sweet."

As for Robert McNeil: "I'm going to be co-producing movies for TV, making short films to start." Eventually, he's looking into producing feature films.

And the franchise itself? Next up would seem to be ENTERPRISE, a series that predates TOS—and the Federation itself—and is already ruffling some hardcore fans' feathers by apparently flying in the face of established "future history" (not the least of which is having a ship called the Enterprise before *the* Enterprise, and having a Vulcan on-board prior to Spock). Still, with VOYAGER remaining the UPN's sole, tentpole dramatic series after seven years, there's no doubt that many at parent Viacom wish that the franchise still has the strength to "Live long and prosper."

**Further News**  
by Dan Persons

Clive Barker is promising that when the film adaptation of THE DAMNATION GAME, about a body-guard charged literally with protecting the soul of his employer, comes

out from Phoenix Pictures, it will offer the kind of unabashed horror we've long come to expect from the author, and too rarely see on the big screen these days. We'll be holding you to that promise, Clive... STRANGE FREQUENCY, the rock-oriented, TWILIGHT ZONE-like anthology that VH1 ran as a movie-of-the-week earlier in the year, seems to have hit the boomer net in the right place. Eight more half-hour episodes have been ordered up, potentially to air as early as this summer...Artists Production Group and StudioCanal have signed up Paul Harris Boardman and Scott Derrickson (of URBAN LEGENDS: FINAL CUT) to write FUTURE TENSE, a time-travel story in which soldiers from the future are sent back to WWII in an attempt to change the outcome of World War III. Cathy Schulman of AGP told *Variety* that the film will be, "An event release that will expand the boundaries of the sci-fi action thriller." Yah... BUFFY's Marc Blucas will co-star with Laura Regan in THEY, a suspense film in which Regan plays a woman who must uncover the roots of her fear of the dark...Weetzie Bat, the funky protagonist of Francesca Lia Block's *Dangerous Angels* young adult book series, is coming to the screen via Fox Searchlight. The series' cast of ghosts, fairies, and assorted mortal slackers will be adapted by Block herself, with feature newcomer Theresa Duncan in talks to direct... Lions Gate is moving to production with AMERICAN PSYCHO II, this time featuring a female killer played by Mila Kunis; because we all need this to be turned into a Freddie-like franchise, don't we?...THE MAGIC BRUSH, a Chinese children's story about, duh, a magic brush, is being adapted by Hong Kong digital studio Centro as a CG animated feature... Amityville crosses the Atlantic when Anna Paquin stars in THE DARKNESS, a feature about a house in the Spanish countryside whose dark past has a deadly effect on its inhabitants. **CFQ**

John McTiernan on

# ROLLERBALL

It's "Back from the Future" as the DIE HARD Director Finds His Roman Arena Showing Up on Reality TV.

By Chuck Wagner

John McTiernan—who brought gray matter to the action genre in films such as PREDATOR and THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER—did not feel a far-flung future was necessary in his remake of ROLLERBALL.

"It isn't future at all," said McTiernan. "I just set it in Central Asia, about five minutes in the future. The original movie projects it out 200 years in the future, after the revolution, or something-or-other, and the

corporations blah-blah-blah—all this science fiction and sociology in order to project a world where people regularly get hurt so other people can make money. I didn't think you needed to put that in some fairyland. I think that's perfectly plausible in the here-and-now."

With shows on television like SURVIVOR and Xtreme Football, this is a perfectly reasonable theorem.

"I haven't seen the XFL," said McTiernan, "but I hear the football isn't very good!"

In the original film, ROLLERBALL was a sport sanctioned by the world governing body to provide entertainment for the masses. In McTiernan's remake, the set-up is different.

"The basic notion is that something like the XFL, or the WWF, or something like that springs up somewhere off in the Third World. The story is, what happens when our economic system spreads to other places in the world, without having our moral system spread, too?"

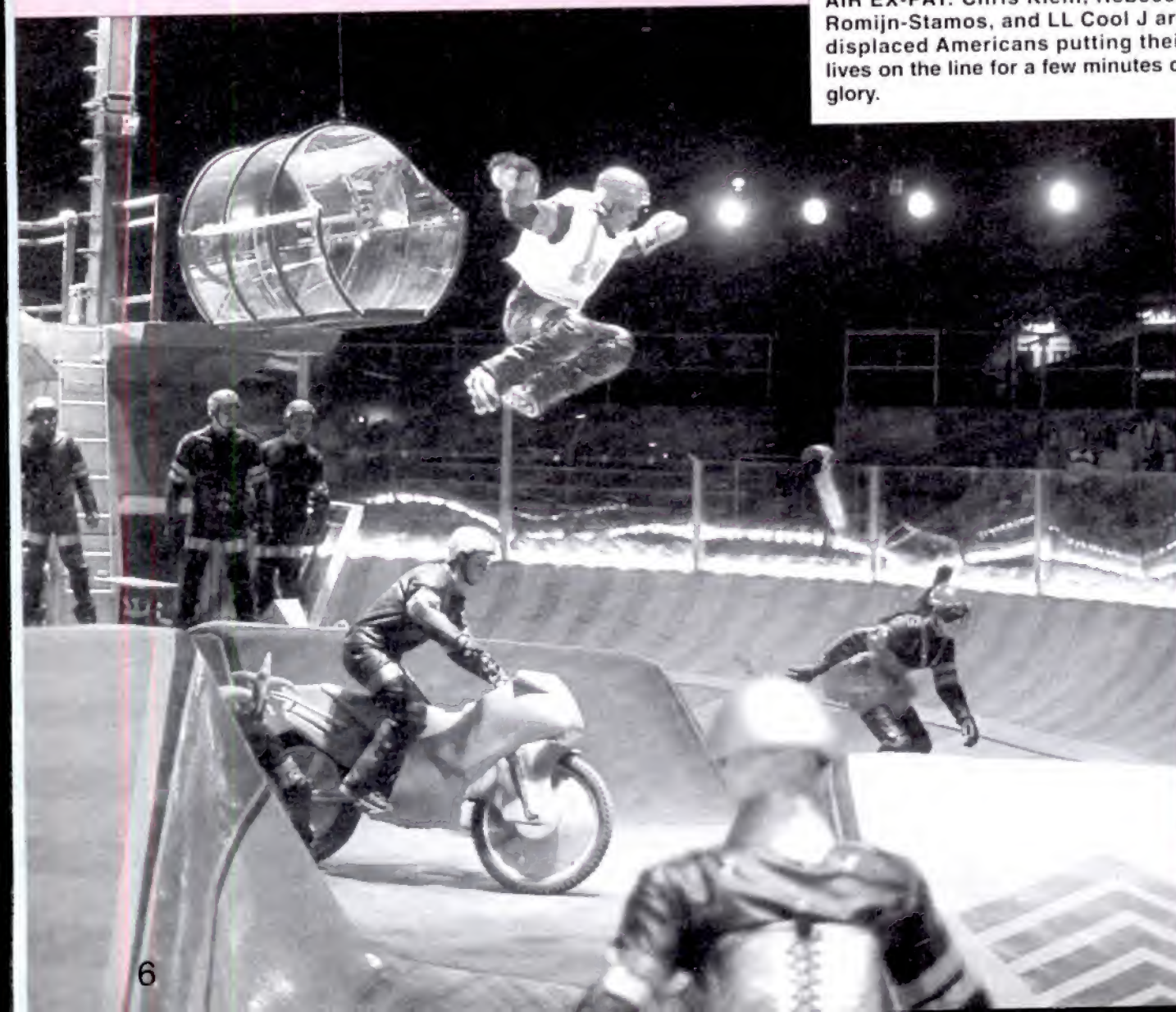
**Cinefantastique:** Western morals?

**McTiernan:** You can say what you want, there are a lot of things. Public opinion, if you will, or individual moral restraints that restrain some of the more horrific things that entrepreneurial capitalism could come up with. If you went to a place where they had the new economic system, but they didn't come with the moral package—they restrained it—that's the situation we've projected. What we've said is, anything that happens here happens pretty quickly in the rest of the world. You've got a WWF some place in Central Asia in a country that's run by an alliance between former KGB officers and Russian thugs. How long do you think it's going to take them to figure out that their ratings—and their take, the amount of money that they make—will go up if they get somebody hurt in every show? Our story is about a couple of young Americans who discover that that's what they're caught in. They're caught in a sports-entertainment industry that is consistently getting people killed.

**CFQ:** And are there women and men teams?

**McT:** It's a co-ed game. The notion is that we're following some kids who are the ringers. They're advertised as American hockey stars who have changed sports and are now

**AIR EX-PAT:** Chris Klein, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, and LL Cool J are displaced Americans putting their lives on the line for a few minutes of glory.





**WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLION PIECES?:** John McTiernan discovered that **ROLLERBALL**'s blood sports looked right at home "five minutes into the future."

playing rollerball.

**CFQ:** Willing participants...?

**McT:** Initially, yes. They think it's a great opportunity, because they weren't really American hockey stars. They wanted to get into hockey, but weren't quite good enough. But as rollerballers, they live like princes in the middle of enormous poverty. The American ringers make a hundred times what the local players are making. But the show doesn't air in the U.S. During the time of the movie, the promoters are hoping for a South American cable deal. They'll get the North American deal next year. It's sort of how something like this would really work.

**CFQ:** But problems arise...

**McT:** They discover that the promoters of this sport are consistently sending people either to the hospital or the cemetery, at the rate of one or two of them a week. They try to leave, and discover they really can't. The villains are the promoters, economic criminals, and it leads ultimately to—if not a revolution, at least a rebellion.

**CFQ:** Rollerball consists of teams on skates and motorcycles trying to score with a heavy ball. Not an easy movie to make...

**McT:** It took some work, because our stunts are actual. I mean, you can have people diving out of airplanes without a parachute, grabbing hold of power lines on the way down—any sort of thing you want to project, you can do it now. But it actually isn't very dangerous for the people because

they're just creating the raw material. The stunt gets created in the computer and it isn't actually dangerous.

We didn't have any stuff like that. We had much more mundane stunts: jumping motorcycles, people on skates jumping over the top of other people on skates, you know, seemingly quite simple stuff in the world of space freighters bombarding alien planets.

**CFQ:** Is this the hardest film you've ever worked on?

**McT:** No. Actually, it was the most fun. What's neat about it is that it's a movie, not a radio play. The events of the plot happen visually. You're not told about what happens; you see it. It's the first time I've gotten a chance to really do a movie that way. Personally, I'm really gassed by it! Also it's the first political movie I've ever done.

**ROLLERBALL**, starring Chris Klein, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, and LL Cool J opens August 17th.

CFQ



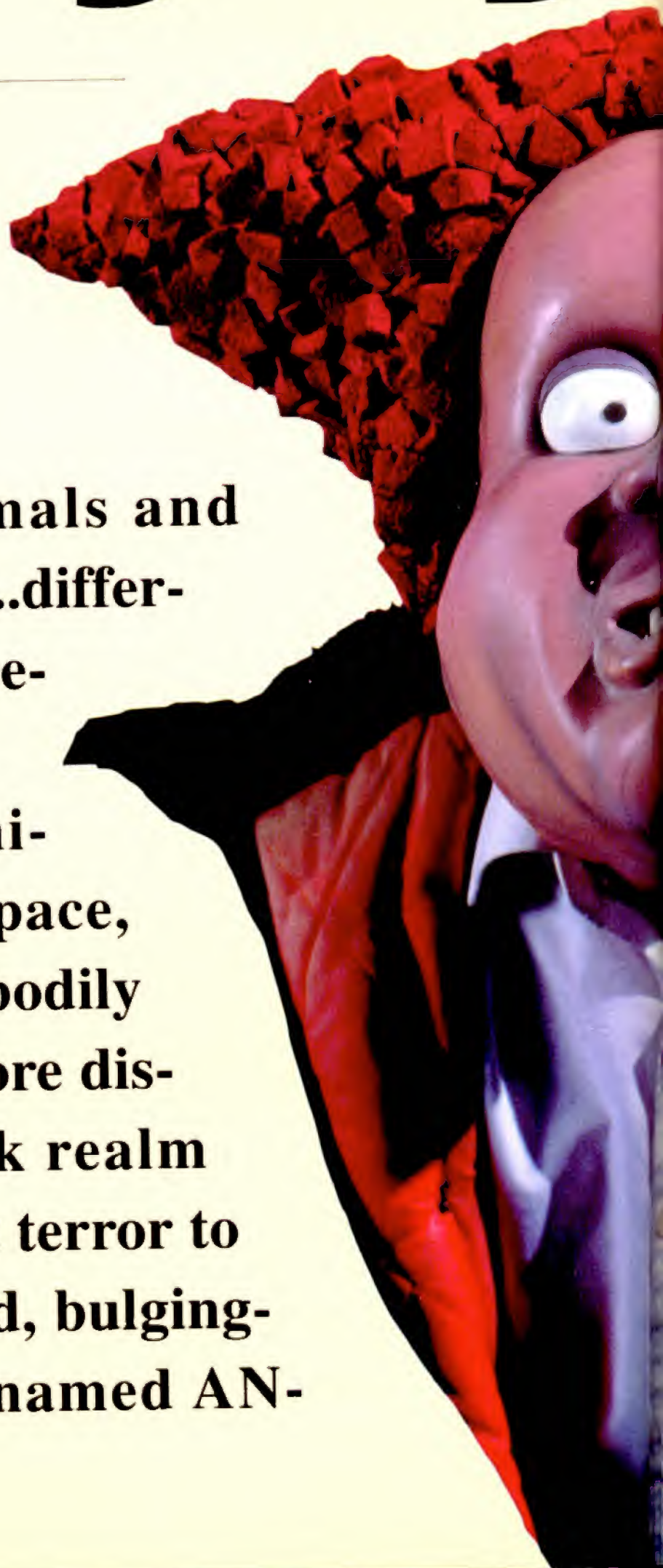
# Angry

*By Andrew Osmond*

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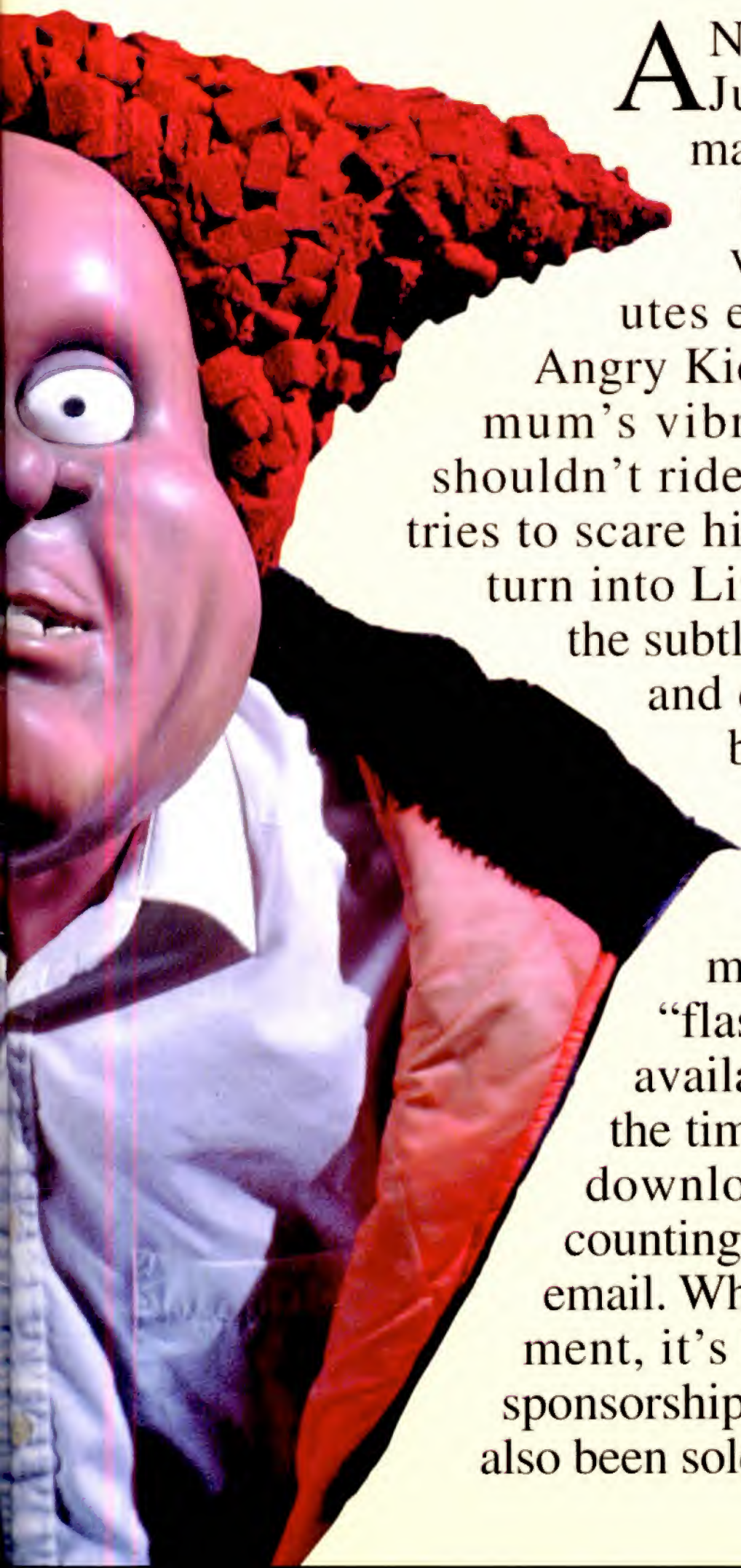
Not all animated characters are loveable.

They're not all cuddly animals and charming eccentrics. Some are...different. Alarming. Gross, even. Fleeing the constraints of traditional screen media, these animated outlaws lurk in cyberspace, where their nosepickings and bodily mishaps are appreciated by more discerning fans. It's in this dark realm where one may find the newest terror to sweep the Web, a ginger-haired, bulging-eyed, pre-teen abomination named ANGRY KID.





# Kid



**A**NGRY KID isn't hard to understand. Just imagine the average little boy, magnify his unloveliest traits by a factor of ten, and you've got it. His adventures (skits of one to two minutes each) aren't hard to follow either.

Angry Kid brushes his teeth with the help of mum's vibrator. Angry Kid learns why you shouldn't ride a bike with no hands. Angry Kid tries to scare his little sister, only for the sister to turn into Linda Blair. In short, Angry Kid has the subtlety of a sledgehammer and the taste and delicacy of...well, the average little boy.

The series is available at Atom Films' website ([www.atomfilms.com](http://www.atomfilms.com)). Twenty-five films have been made in total, plus a couple of tie-in "flash" games. The last batch should be available about the time you read this. At the time of writing, ANGRY KID has been downloaded some four million times, not counting the people who pass the films on by email. While the series was begun as an experiment, it's been able to pay for itself through sponsorship and advertising. KID cartoons have also been sold to other commercial sites.

## GENESIS OF THE KID

One of the most distinctive things about ANGRY KID is its strange look. Angry Kid is (we pray!) not a human being, but still seems to be "real," and appears in live-action settings. Actually the character is created by pixilation, the technique of treating a live actor as a stop-motion object. (For previous examples of pixilation, see Aardman's SLEDGEHAMMER music video with Peter

Gabriel, and the bolex brothers feature-length film, SECRET ADVENTURES OF TOM THUMB.)

Angry Kid is played by an actor in a mask. Or, to be more precise, an actor in a series of subtly different masks, shot one at a time. About 400 masks were made over the course of the series, able to accommodate different expressions, contortions, and vowel/consonant mouth movements. The masks were made from vacuum-formed plastic and were shaped from one malleable clay sculpture. In fact, the process can be seen as a relative of Aardman's more straightfor-

ward claymation, though there's little resemblance between Angry Kid and Wallace and Gromit.

As Darren Walsh, creator and director of the series, explains, the ANGRY KID episodes are fairly improvised affairs. An episode starts with a talk-through, a storyboard, some provisional voicetracks, and whatever new masks are needed for the animation. (Angry Kid's dulcet tones are provided by Walsh himself.) As is normal for animation, the next step is a dope sheet, a chart where the dialogue and action are plotted frame-by-frame. The sheet is then transferred to a laptop computer on set. However, Walsh said, "In practice, we can decide to chop a bit of dialogue, or speed an action up as we go along."

The masked actor (an animator familiar with the process) will undergo four or five "sittings" in the course of a short film, spread over a couple of days. As Walsh notes, it's lightning

**ALL THE HORRORS OF HOME:** A bold departure from the cozy attitude of the WALLACE AND GROMIT series, Aardman's ANGRY KID offers glimpses of British family life never before captured in stop-motion (and, with any luck, never will be again).



film-making by the sluggish standards of animation. It's still a gruelling process, however. "The actor tends to pass out after about two hours. We usually stop halfway through a big character move - Angry Kid standing up, for example. Then we let the actor go for a massage, and start again fresh with the same move two hours later."

A couple of the films use different techniques. For example, 'Bone' shows Angry Kid cycling in the great outdoors, before crashing and being mauled by a dog. This film was first shot in live-action, but at half-speed, with the actors also moving at half-speed, so that when it was sped up it would look slightly unreal. Finally, the appropriate masks were matted onto the action. The aforementioned dog appears in several films, either as a hand-puppet or as an armature. Angry Kid's little sister, who appears in some segments, is a large puppet with her own set of face masks.

## SCREEN TEST

Darren Walsh started as an animator at the bolex brothers studio, which made the pixilated TOM THUMB, mentioned above. He joined Aardman as a freelance animator and scriptwriter and created Angry Kid as, literally, a screen test. "It was a pilot film about how long you could stand a little boy in front of a microphone before he dries up," said Walsh. "Of course, the film ends with him kicking the microphone over."

Walsh was encouraged to develop Angry Kid by Aardman co-founder Peter Lord. "I had no real idea who it would appeal to. I just wanted to amuse my mates." The first films were shown at animation festivals and also turned up in late-night slots on Britain's Channel 4. "That's when we realized the format wouldn't work on TV," said Walsh. "With the episodes being only one or two minutes long, they would get lost in the schedules."

For that reason, Aardman elected to release the films on the web, where the potential for edgy, scatological animation was already being explored by luminaries such as Spumco's John Kricfalusi (REN AND STIMPY). The results were impressive. Within fifty days, ANGRY KID had played out his antics more than a million times. David Sproxton, who founded Aardman with Lord, said at the time, "We are extremely excited Angry Kid has become such a big star. Our only concern is that, once he learns of his new found fame, he will prove

**ACTING UNDER THE INFLUENCE:** A specially-trained animator wearing interchangeable masks plays against more traditional animation props (a hand puppet for the dog at lower right, a stop-motion figure for little sister at left) to give ANGRY KID its expressive, otherworldly feel.



the most petulant, childish celebrity around."

And this wasn't the only worry. Certain parties were discomforted by the thought that the studio which produced Wallace and Gromit could also make a series with four-letter expletives and gross-out humor. The president of the Family and Youth Concern group complained, "If ANGRY KID becomes popular, then youngsters will switch on to it. One wonders what the makers are trying to do, as it seems pretty violent and unpleasant."

However, Walsh pointed out that Aardman has always meant more than CREATURE COMFORTS. The studio has never been

locked into Disney-type coziness. You only have to look at the gleefully sadistic short, PIB AND POG, directed by Peter Peake, in which two children's characters mutilate each other, or at poor Edwina getting the chop at the start of CHICKEN RUN. And Walsh argues that there's actually something innocent about ANGRY KID. "We don't set out to be nasty or offensive. There are far more extreme animations on the net than us! ANGRY KID is nothing compared to what goes on in a real kid's mind."

So what's next for ANGRY KID? Walsh has ideas, but he's not telling yet. But be warned: the Web is vast. Angry Kid is not disappearing.

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# of sex and

*ANDROMEDA's Lisa Ryder and Lexa Doig Discuss*

*By David Z.C. Hines*

For Lisa Ryder, GENE RODDENBERRY'S ANDROMEDA's Beka Valentine, coming aboard the last ship in the High Guard Commonwealth was an occasionally disorienting experience. "It was so weird," she said, "because I was filming JASON X, and then I had to come out here for a couple of days to film ANDROMEDA, then go back to JASON X, then, come back to ANDROMEDA. So I was like, *Which ship am I on?* at any given moment."

Ryder had an interest in performing from childhood. "I was always competing and performing in dancing when I was a child," she recalled. "Connecting with an audience was the thing that turned me on. And then I went to University and hooked up with a bunch of people where we formed a theater company. The thing that made me want to do this for a living was the collaborative nature of that company, I think. The stuff I remember fondly is from my theater company—stuff like CASTING NAKED and PANTING OF THE VICTORS and PARADISE. Stuff I had a hand in creating, or if not, wrote by myself."

During her time in theater, Ryder also wrote and performed her own one-woman show. "I guess I was kind of artsy in my early twenties," she admitted. "A lot of the stuff was performance-art-ish, and my one-woman show was inspired a bit because my dad is a psychologist, and he has clients with multiple-per-

sonality disorders. And we started getting into the background of that: what would make somebody's personality split, and how does each character view the world, and do they view the world like we do? Or is it a kind of a fantasy world? To me, it opened up huge possibilities in terms of movement and dance and visual effects."

"Hollywood North" opened other possibilities for Ryder. One such opportunity came when she played Nick Knight's partner in the last season of FOREVER KNIGHT. Ryder has fond memories of the experience and of the FK fanbase—she was pleasantly surprised to get letters wishing her luck from FOREVER KNIGHT fans when her casting was announced—but she would have liked to see more of FK's unique brand of action. "I was on a cop show and Garaint Wyn-Davies was on a vampire show," she said. "I didn't get the



**HONOR IN FORM-FIT LEATHER:** Actresses Lisa Ryder (right) and Lexa Doig (opposite page) must balance the demands of an empathetic performance against ANDROMEDA's crowd-pleasing imperatives.

# starships

Living in Gene Roddenberry's Systems Commonwealth.



fun part! I didn't get the fangs; I didn't get the contact lenses. And now on *ANDROMEDA*, I get to do *all* the fun stuff. It's a much more active role in some ways. Maybe it's a factor of age, perhaps they see me as more of a fighter now."

Beka Valentine certainly sees more conflict. "Beka is turning out to be real strong, a survivor," said Ryder, "someone who fights for what she believes in, but who's kind of guarded, and who's gone through a lot of crap and had a lot of untrustworthy men in her life. It's hard for her to trust, just because the universe as it stands, and her life as she's known it, has not been a very stable and secure place."

That problem trusting, Ryder noted, is "problematic for my relationship with Dylan and Tyr, which makes for a lot of chemistry in most instances. It makes for a lot of tension, I should say. And it's always fun to confront them. I mean, as an actor, that's such a great thing to play, right? You don't really trust somebody or you want to confront them, or you're fighting with them. That's

great!"

Many of Beka's early scenes with Dylan were confrontational walk-and-talks. "Those scenes are still fun to play," Ryder said, "but the scenes I find more fun with Kevin are like... There's this one scene [in 'The Pearls That Were His Eyes'] where he's sitting in my cockpit in the Eureka Maru." Beka is on her way planet-side to do a favor for her Uncle Sid (played by guest star John de Lancie); Dylan tries to dissuade her from going. "I hit him on the shoulder, like he has to get out of my cockpit. It's kind of this jockeying for power, but he has such a good sense of humor about that some times, and I think those are more fun to play.

"He says, 'Only you can do this job up here.' And I say, 'That's not true, the Andromeda can handle that.' And he replies, 'Okay, she can totally handle it, *but I don't want you to go!*'" Ryder laughed. "And it's kind of charming. Those scenes are awfully fun."

Despite Beka's difficulties trusting, Ryder noted that her character has managed created an island of stability for herself with the crew of her ship, the Eureka Maru. "I think her past has brought out the mother in her," Ryder said. "It's a tough universe, and she's taken Rev and Harper and Trance under her wing, in a way. She sees them as equals, but she also feels kind of maternal towards them. She's a tough mom; she's not like a coddling, nurturing kind. She's always looking out for them, but she expects a lot from them."



**MORE THAN MACHINE:** As a living avatar of the warship ANDROMEDA, "Rommie" is Lexa Doig's (second from right) attempt to grant a soul to AI.

Many actors become proprietary of their characters and develop strong ideas about their identities and what direction they'd like to see the characters go in. Asked about the direction she'd like to see Beka take, Ryder demurs. "All I want is good, intelligent scripts and a solid character to appear before my eyes. And then I bring physicality to that. I'm taking it from the scripts—there's so much possibility to Beka, I wouldn't know where to begin to take her plot-wise."

Though Ryder has been in several science fiction projects, ANDROMEDA marks a change of pace for her. "A lot of times, I've been the straight one," she said. "I've been the wife, or the girlfriend of somebody, or the cop that's *not* the vampire! Only recently have I been the one *in* the fights, or shooting at people, and stuff."

And she's glad to be doing it. "You want to participate," she said. "If you're going to be on set, if you're going to be doing a TV series, anyway, you want to be running and jumping and shooting lasers!"

**T**hey gave me jelly boobs," said Lexa Doig. "I'm not tooting my own horn or anything, but I don't need them! So not only did I have cleavage that started up by my neck, I had these *enormous* boobs!"

Doig laughed. The late Gene Roddenberry always had a weakness for attractive women, and encouraged Bill Theiss's gravity-defying wardrobe designs for female guest stars on the original STAR TREK. Doig's costuming on the first season of ANDROMEDA lived up to the Roddenberry legacy in spades.

At one point, she was even fitted for a small corset. "It literally went from just underneath my breasts to just above my hips, and it was fairly thin," Doig recalled. "But, as the designer's got her foot in the middle of my back and she's yanking on the strings and I'm losing oxygen, she's explaining to me what happens: your intestines and bladder get shoved down and forward, your kidneys become pushed together and skewed, your liver shoves off down and to the back—it actually changes your anatomy! I

just went, *No, I can't. I literally can't do this! There's no way.* The plus side is that it forces you to stand upright; you'll never get a slouching android if she's wearing a corset. But I'm a 'track pants and sweatshirt' sort of a person."

And the jelly boobs? For the record, they were uncomfortably heavy. "When you put them in your bra," Doig explained, "they dig into your shoulder blades." One day, she quietly left them out; when no one noticed, she continued to work *au naturelle*. (If you'd wondered why Andromeda's bust size suddenly diminishes during the first season, now you know.)

As for Lexa Doig herself, the facts are these: Toronto native; Scottish-Irish father, hailing from Montreal; mother from the Philippines. Got interested in acting because her parents held theater season tickets when she was a kid. Grew up wanting to be on stage, because "I didn't really see any faces I identified with watching television," she said. "Faces that didn't relate to my world at all. In theater I can see two people who look nothing alike playing brother and sister. I related to it." Did a theater arts high school program, which included stage productions and "corporate motivation" plays. Modeled on the side, of which she said, "I wasn't even remotely successful at it because:

a) I was short [five foot six], and b) I hated it." Parleyed modeling into commercial gigs; got an acting agent. Her first professional acting job was on William Shatner's TEKWAR series ("And," she said, "I grew up in a household full of Trekkies. My dad and older brother are huge sci-fi fans. So I was like, 'Oh my God, Captain Kirk!')." She has yet to do theater as an adult.

"I initially thought Andromeda was going to be a hell of a lot more artificial [as a character]," Doig said. "But the goal of the producers was to have a sentient starship which was AI and had the full range of human emotions, and—as far as the human body was concerned—on close inspection was next to impossible to distinguish from humans. So it was a little odd for me: 'So just play her as human?' 'Yup!' 'Oookay!'"

But Andromeda is still a warship, and there are occasional blunt reminders of her nature. Doig found one in a scene between Andromeda and Beka Valentine, in the episode "Angel Dark, Demon Bright."

"For the first time since the fall, after coming out of the black hole, I'm almost combat-ready," Doig recalled. "I've got all my slipfighters, I've got drones. I don't have a full crew, but I'm ready to go, and Dylan doesn't want to fight. Beka's response is, 'Well, I don't know what to say to you,' because it weards her out that there's this warship talking to her. Andromeda's whole thing is, 'I'm a warship. I don't like walking away from a fight.' And lots of little things like that are in almost every episode. It's almost like the small scenes tell a lot more about who she really is, as opposed to these big expositional episodes that are like, *Who is Andromeda?* With the big, meaty, sink-your-teeth-into kinds of things, there's always a fear, from my perspective, that I'm going to be sitting down with my stool and bucket and milking it for all it's worth. I end up throwing most of it away. Whereas in the



**STRENGTH OF WILL:** Ryder regards Beka's relationship to the crew of the Eureka Maru as almost parental (that's her with Keith Hamilton Cobb above), but also enjoys the prickly byplay she has with Captain Dylan Hunt (Kevin Sorbo at left).



smaller scenes I can actually find keys to my character."

Doig finds some of those keys in the scenes in which she appears as "Rommié," the Andromeda Ascendant's life-like android.

techno-nerd played by Gordon Michael Woolvett) decided to do it, because he wanted a love doll."

Harper's thinking may have proved to be more optimistic than plausible, but "An-

"The High Guard ships were all supposed to have humanoid avatars," she said. "I asked [co-executive producer] Robert [Hewitt Wolfe] about that, the backstory being that they decided to stop doing that—building these android avatars—because after a while they develop a sentience of their own. Not that that's a bad thing, but it's essentially like parceling a chunk of your personality—your soul—off to another being. They decided not to do it anymore. Andromeda never bothered to create an avatar for herself. Harper [the

dromeda quite likes Harper, in the sense of 'Gosh, you're a cute, little, necessary pet.' And actually it's not even that condescending; it's just that his con-

stant advances get to be, I think, tiring after a while...or grating. At the same time, there's an enormous affection she has for him."

It is affection that extends to most of her crew (with slight exceptions for Beka and Tyr). After all, she needs them. "There's an episode about a starship that's been alone for a long time," Doig said, "and it's not pretty. So Andromeda does need to have that. She needs to have a crew, and she needs to have a captain; these sentient starships were designed to need that."

Some of Doig's acting challenges have been purely logistical. "With most of the hologram stuff," Doig said, "I'm a part of the scene but they will try to save my coverage for last because it's kind of time-consuming. I've got to shoot the plate shot, and then me in front of the green screen, and because of that I'll lose, for example, as far as the actors being there to read off-camera, Kevin. The AI stuff, they'll save for the end of the day."

It's getting better, though. Experience has helped, both for Doig and for the production team. And even the costumes are shaking out, though there have been some bumps along the way. "What's up with this studded leather bikini top and disco pants? She's on a *prison planet!*" a laughing Doig recalled asking a Tribune executive about her costume for the episode, "A Rose in the Ashes." "And he was like, 'Lexa, you don't understand! You, in a leather *bikini*, in a *cage*, equals RATINGS!'"

It's been thirty years, but some things never change.

CFQ

# DINOTOPIA

*Literature's Most Miraculous "Lost World" Will Come to Life Next Year as a Miniseries.*

By Dan Scapperotti

Middle Earth, Atlantis, the lost empire of Mu. Adventures set in these fantasy worlds have kept readers mesmerized for decades, but they were primarily literary worlds, painted solely through the vivid language of their authors. When author James Gurney decided to build his own lost civilization, he took readers one step beyond his predecessors, envisioning a world not just in words, but through his imaginative illustrations. *Dinotopia* is this world, a land where dinosaurs and humans live and work side by side.

As a child, author James Gurney was fascinated by dinosaurs and lost civilizations. Influenced by the illustrations he found in old bound editions of *National Geographic*, Gurney majored in archeology at Berkeley with a focus on lost cities and ancient worlds. Later he worked as an illustrator for *National Geographic* and landed a job as a background painter for Ralph Bakshi and Frank Frazetta on their 1983 animated feature, *FIRE AND ICE*. This, and his work on science fiction paperback covers, set the basis for *DINOTOPIA*.

"In the late '80s, I got this idea to paint this lost empire," said James Gurney. "The first one I painted was 'Waterfall City.' It kind of combines two loves of mine, Niagara Falls and Italian cities like Venice and Florence. I threw those two together and tried to think of a city that has canals and fountains

everywhere. My father-in-law looked at the painting and said this has got to be the city that invented the flush toilet." His next painting, "Dinosaur Parade," a lavish panorama featuring the prehistoric creatures adorned with bridles and saddles marching down the main thoroughfare of Waterfall City amidst the cheers of onlookers, became the cover for *Dinotopia*, the first book in the series, published in 1992.

Now, producer Robert Halmi, Sr., who previously took the fantasy epic to new

heights with such Hallmark Entertainment television mini-series as *THE 10TH KING-*



DOM, ALICE IN WONDERLAND and JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS, is immersed in his most challenging project to date: bringing the wonderful world of *Dinotopia* to life in a live-action series for ABC. Scheduled for broadcast in the Spring of 2002, the six-hour miniseries is both a sequel and an adaptation of Gurney's books. In the first book, *Dinotopia: A Land Apart From Time*, Arthur Denison embarks with his son, Will, on a voyage of



discovery. Sailing in uncharted waters, their vessel is struck by a typhoon. The sole survivors, Arthur and Will are rescued by dolphins and deposited on the shore of an undiscovered continent. They soon find themselves in a world of wonders, a land inhabited by intelligent, prehistoric creatures.

These dinosaurs have their own language. Their alphabet is composed of a series of reptilian footprints. In saurian publishing circles, the number one best-seller is *The Care and Teaching of Humans*, a handy manual which the dinosaurs began referring to with great frequency when Homo sapiens of all nationalities began spilling up onto their shores hundreds of years ago. Arthur and Will journey to Waterfall City, built amidst the rushing waters and roaring cataracts of several rivers. From there, it's

get away from the lost civilization, taking with him some of its treasures—greets them. Soon they meet Marion, a beautiful teenager who has just stopped a charging ankylosaurus. They travel to the continent's magnificent capital, where humans and dinosaurs live in harmony. While in the book, Will Denison spent some time at a farm where baby dinosaurs were hatched and later became a Skybax pilot, in the film, Karl becomes nursemaid to a corythosaurus he calls "26" and David lands in the Skybax saddle.



person is riding a dinosaur or some other fantasy creature, and big epic sets with lots of figures. So I thought, *Okay, I'll do the painting that could never be done in live action.*

"Part of my objective in doing those first paintings was to do the impossible. Ironically, now with the digital revolution upon us, a lot of people in the effects industry are interested in *DINOTOPIA* because it gives them the chance to do the kinds of set-pieces they've always wanted to do."

The myth of Atlantis and the idea of an advanced civilization that existed prior to our own always fascinated Gurney. Perhaps influenced by the George Pal film, Gurney's third book,

*Dinotopia: First Flight*, published in 1999, goes back into *Dinotopia's* past, when the country

was threatened by the Empire of Poseidos. "I was able to use that general idea with *Dinotopia* by having a futuristic past sometime in *Dinotopia's* history where they had developed machines even beyond our own modern age, and had a city like Atlantis that has been lost or disappeared beneath the sea. I was able to work that into the world building of *Dinotopia* also as a way of including my own fascination with science fiction and machines. The basic machine design premise in the Poseidon world of *FIRST FLIGHT* is that all the machines have to be based on living creatures. So in-

one discovery after another, including a world beneath the surface of the Earth. Simon Moore, who scripted *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS* and *THE 10<sup>TH</sup> KINGDOM* for Hallmark, has adapted Gurney's first two books, *Dinotopia* and *Dinotopia: The World Beneath* for the six-hour, three-night TV version. While Arthur and Will are absent from this version, there are hints that the series may be a sequel to their tale. In Moore's adaptation, Will's character has been divided between two brothers. Like the Denisons before them, Frank Scott and his two sons, Karl and David, are marooned on *Dinotopia*. Frank is apparently lost at sea but the boys make it to land. Cyrus Crabb, a shifty con man who will stop at nothing to

The six-hour miniseries, directed by Marco Brambilla, stars Tyron Leltso as Karl Scott and Wentworth Miller as his brother, David. Katie Carr plays the beautiful Marion. For the villainous Cyrus Crabb, Brambilla cast David Thewlis. Genre veteran Alice Krige plays Marion's mother, Rosemary. Her father, Mayor Waldo, the chief honcho of Waterfall City, is actor Jim Carter.

During his days in the movie industry, James Gurney often spoke with the people on the special effects teams, asking them what their toughest assignments were. "They would always tell me the same thing," he said. "Water effects—because they don't miniaturize well—things where a

**GLORIOUS HARMONY:** The grand vision that led to the cover of *Dinotopia*, the book (above), has inspired the creators of *DINOTOPIA*, the mini series (left). ABOVE: Author/Illustrator James Gurney.

country was threatened by the Empire of Poseidos. "I was able to use that general idea with *Dinotopia* by having a futuristic past sometime in *Dinotopia's* history where they had developed machines even beyond our own modern age, and had a city like Atlantis that has been lost or disappeared beneath the sea. I was able to work that into the world building of *Dinotopia* also as a way of including my own fascination with science fiction and machines. The basic machine design premise in the Poseidon world of *FIRST FLIGHT* is that all the machines have to be based on living creatures. So in-



**SITE SEEING:** The initial inspiration for *Dinotopia*, Waterfall City (above), becomes a major locale for the miniseries. **BELOW:** Preliminary design for dino-powered travel.

stead of having cars, you have walking machines like dinosaurs, called 'strutters,' or flying machines called 'skimmers' that are based on trilobites."

When George Lucas released *STAR WARS EPISODE ONE: THE PHANTOM MENACE*, *Dinotopia* fans thought that certain ele-

ments strongly resembled those in Gurney's books. "What people noticed most were the parade with the people and the reptilian creatures at the end, the city that's built on the waterfall, and some of the submarine sequences," said an amused Gurney. "A lot of journalists picked up on the similarities and

wrote articles

making direct comparisons between *Dinotopia* and the *STAR WARS* film. Every time I go out to a book signing, I get the question, "Did you work on the project? Were you a designer for the *STAR WARS* film?" I have to say "no, I wasn't."

Lucas himself was concerned enough to give Gurney a call. "One of the most surprising things was that I got a call from Lucas himself the day after his movie came out," the author said. "He was worried that I might be concerned about the similarities, but the only concern I had was that when the *DINOTOPIA* film comes out, I didn't want anyone to think it was based on the *STAR WARS* movie. So many people noticed it in the effects industry and the production design field that there was a lot of debate on the subject. My view is that it's very flattering that someone as talented as George Lucas would look to *Dinotopia* for inspiration. I'm honored that it's a book he reads to his own kids. It's in the nature of any creative enterprise that one person will be influenced by another to a lesser or greater degree. I know when I was in art school, I was very much inspired by *STAR WARS*."

## DINOVIEW TOURS



The huge production covered nine sound stages of Britain's Pinewoods Studios, including the cavernous 007 stage. Production designer Walter Martishius created Gurney's wondrous Waterfall City on five and a half acres of the studio's back lot. This will be only ten percent of the city. The remaining vistas will be provided by CGI "set extensions." Framestore, the London effects house which created the visuals for WALKING WITH DINOSAURS, as well as such Hallmark films as MERLIN and ARABIAN NIGHTS, will provide the CGI for DINO-TOPIA, including masses of dinosaurs, as well as a sky-darkening horde of pteranodons.

"I'm very much involved with the producers at Hallmark," said Gurney. "I'm very happy that they've championed the project and are filming it. Framestore, the effects company, did WALKING WITH DINOSAURS. These guys are really the best in the world at creating dinosaurs with personalities and believability and movements and textures, so I'm really thrilled that they're involved. The Jim Henson Creature Shop will be handling the animatronics, so it will be a live-action production with actors and state-of-the-art effects. It's probably one of the largest budgets per hour that Hallmark Entertainment has done yet. I'm proud to have DINO-TOPIA in the company of such wonderful classics as GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, ALICE IN WONDERLAND, and ANIMAL FARM. I went over to the Jim Henson Creature Shop last summer just to see their operation, and was very impressed by the range of different creature effects that they're able to do. Not just creature effects, but they were working on a human baby when I was there. They said that was the Holy Grail of the animatronic business, because we know what a baby looks like. It's the best possible team I could imagine working on this."

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**YOUTH FACTOR:** The multi-generational adventure of the book (below) will be skewed slightly younger for television. ABOVE: Actor Tyron Leitso as Karl, with "26."



# THE BUNKER

*CG Takes a Holiday as Director Rob Green Explores the Power of Nuance*

By Alan Jones

War-time horror combines with psychological terror and supernatural suspense in *THE BUNKER*, a new British chiller. Described by star Jason (BRUISER) Flemying as "ALIENS goes ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT"

and by producer Daniel Figuero as "CROSS OF IRON meets THE HAUNTING," the film was shot over six weeks during the summer of 2000 at London's Twickenham Studios and on location at nearby Black Park, Hammer's favored woodland venue throughout the '60s. *THE BUNKER* marks the directorial debut of editor/short

filmmaker Rob Green, who stated, "For years I've wanted to make a horror film in the Val Lewton tradition, with strange events relying on pulse-pounding tension and creepy atmospherics, rather than full-frontal gore or ambitious special effects. The unseen is far scarier than what you do see, and producer Lewton proved that in

such '40s classics as *CAT PEOPLE*, *THE LEOPARD MAN*, and *I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE*. My intention with *THE BUNKER* is to really get under the audience's skin like Lewton did, and give them an intense emotional reaction to the shattering on-screen mayhem."

ALL KARMIC ON THE WESTERN FRONT: A troop of German soldiers in the waning days of WWII face horrors beyond their imaginations when they enter *THE BUNKER*.

The Millennium Pictures production also stars Jack (TALOS THE MUMMY) Davenport, Christopher (THE FIFTH ELEMENT) Fairbank, John Carlisle, Andrew Lee Potts, Andrew (INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE) Tiernan, Eddie Marsan, Simon Kunz, and Charley Boorman (director John Boorman's son and lead in *THE EMERALD FOREST*). All the actors play German soldiers who take refuge from advancing Allied forces in a dark underground bunker system on Christmas Eve, 1944. Battle-weary and torn apart by dissent, the shell-shocked platoon think they've found a safe haven in the Ardennes Forest. As night closes in, though, a series of increasingly bizarre and horrifying incidents begins to unfold.

It turns out that the bunker has been built on the site of a medieval plague pit and comes





**WHO GOES THERE?:** *BUNKER* director Rob Green took a cue from Val Lewton in letting the shadows tell the story of soldiers confronting the supernatural. **RIGHT:** Jason Flemying as the war-weary Corporal Baumann.



complete with legends of witchcraft. This, combined with a harrowing past incident tying the soldiers together in collective guilt, unnerves them all. Each starts witnessing mysterious occurrences. Is the squad simply being stalked by the enemy in a cat-and-mouse game of psychological warfare? Have the demons from their bloody past finally unhinged one of their number? Or could there be a deranged supernatural force at work, seeking grisly vengeance?

"*THE BUNKER* is a haunted house movie in World War II disguise," pointed out screenwriter Clive Dawson. "I was inspired to write the script thanks to my father, who served in the Royal Air Force. He'd tell me stories about the war, which I found fascinating. My mother was in the Land Army, too, and she only fueled the flames of my curiosity with further wartime tales. Then, as a teenager, I went to school in Guernsey (one of the Channel Islands), which was occupied by the Germans during the

war. The place is honeycombed with bunkers and, being a typical wayward kid, I loved breaking through the barbed-wire barriers and exploring the desolate, spooky tunnels covered in horrid graffiti. They were such unsettling places to wander around in—I thought they'd make a terrific setting for a horror film, especially a ghost story.

"I came up with the basic concept for *THE BUNKER* in 1988 and wrote a first draft in 1993. That script secured me a place at the Northern Film School in 1994 where I took a Masters Degree in Screen Writing." Dawson eventually carved a name for himself in British television, writing for such popular long-running series as *CASUALTY* and *LONDON'S*

*BURNING*. It was meeting Rob Green around this time which cemented a working relationship that would ultimately result in *THE BUNKER* becoming a reality nine years later.

He continued, "Rob was directing a short film based on the Edgar Allan Poe story 'The Black Cat,' and I was hired to provide him with some brief feline animation. Rob's enthusiasm for the psychological approach to horror was infectious.

When I found out that we also shared a love for Val Lewton, Roger Corman quickies, and great British classics like *DEAD OF NIGHT* and *NIGHT OF THE EAGLE*, I let him read *THE BUNKER* script for his opinion, and to see if he'd consider directing."

Rob Green, who crafted the British release trailers for *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT*, added, "I liked Clive's script, but the first draft was more

about zombies in tunnels and the undead coming back to life for revenge. I pushed him to make it more psychological, leaning towards suggestion, rather than spell everything out in such clearly defined terms. I felt the story would play far more realistically if the audience totally believed in the situation and empathized with the characters. It was against the trend at the time, but I was convinced the story would work better if you got glimpses of shadowy things in the darkness, while never being sure if they were merely in the soldiers' imaginations or not. The final script became a real Boy's Own war adventure, blending seat-edged ghastliness with eerily affecting overtones."

Dawson continued, "Although I did envision *THE BUNKER* as a straight horror happening, it's now the ambiguities which make it so successful. The soldiers could be haunted by

ghosts; their delusions could be the aftermath of a nerve gas attack. Or it could be the other side playing psychological games. Being open to all those interpretations makes it a far more interesting genre piece. The scariest thing is these men are killing each other through paranoia and mistrust. That's why the story wouldn't work with British soldiers, as they don't come with the same baggage or associations. Our German characters are ordinary conscripts, they aren't Nazis although one is a sympathizer, and they had no option but to enlist and fight for the greater good of the Fatherland. By the time they get to the bunker, they represent a defeated nation, and their self-esteem and morale are at their lowest points for being duped by such historical evil. It's important to go for extra resonance above any core story, and *THE BUNKER* operates on many levels under its deceptively simple surface."

Finance for *THE BUNKER* was raised through a public share option deal masterminded by pro-

ducer Daniel Figuero, who recently used the same scheme to fund *THE SCARLET TUNIC*, based on Thomas Hardy's novel *The Melancholy Hussar*, starring Jean-Marc Barr. Said Figuero, "THE BUNKER didn't need much money really, because the story is a perfectly-crafted miniature. We had to build the bunker maze at Twickenham and, apart from scout for the few outside locations, that's all we've had to do. I've known Rob for a long time now and knew he'd be up to the challenge of creating something different, special, and atypical in the grand tradition of British horror."

He added, "Britain lost the plot with horror production after the heyday of Hammer, and the video industry cheapening the genre image further in the early '80s didn't help. So now you either have to meet Hollywood head-on with sophisticated special effects or go back to basics and create something with a unique spin, to put the audience through all the exciting suspense hoops without expensive digital trickery. Rob can clearly do that, as he loves

the kind of horror that scares through implication. The fantastic cast the script attracted definitely lifts *THE BUNKER* into the A list category too."

Jason Flemying plays Corporal Baumann in *THE BUNKER*, a soldier who first becomes the object of scorn and vilification amongst his uneasy rank, but whose valour in the face of impending disaster turns him into an unlikely hero. The *DEEP RISING* star is the son of Gordon Flemying, the director of the Amicus duo, *DOCTOR WHO AND THE DALEKS* and *DALEKS: INVASION EARTH 2150 AD*, and he juggled acting in *THE BUNKER* while also appearing as Netley in the Hughes Brothers' Jack the Ripper saga, *FROM HELL*, starring Johnny Depp. He laughed, "I've been flying back and forth between the *FROM HELL* locations in Prague and *THE BUNKER* in Twickenham; I wanted to be in both so badly because they were such great parts. Sometimes this job works out like that and you don't sleep for a few months."

He continued, "Baumann is quite a simple character. He was

**WAR CASUALTIES:** Images reminiscent of nerve gas attacks meld with hallucinogenic horror to make *THE BUNKER* a unique blend of history and fantasy.





**AMBIANCE OF FEAR:** Set design and lighting go a long way towards generating an atmosphere of dread (above), but sometimes you've just got to go for the explicit stuff (right).

a committed German nationalist but, during the last six months of the war, he's become a ghost, walking through the battlefields. Everything he passionately believed in about the Fatherland was a lie.

"None of us have attempted German accents because that isn't important in the scheme of things. The detail is a defeated army, and that's the essence of their behavior in the claustrophobic bunker. I've had a great time making *THE BUNKER*—it's such a different kind of horror film. I mean, one day you're acting out *THE GUNS OF NAVARONE*, the next you're up to your neck in mummified corpses from the Middle Ages!"

Another troubled refugee in the Siegfried Line bunker is Lance Corporal Ebert, played by Jack Davenport, most recently seen as a gay victim in *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY*. The son of actor Nigel Davenport, the 28 year-old has become a heartthrob in Britain due to two high-profile television series, *THIS LIFE* and *COUPLINGS*.

He said. "I'm in *THE BUNKER* because the script scared me to death the first time I read it. It's a fantastically taut piece of writing and I loved the fact the supernatural element was up to individual interpretation. As a study of ensemble fear, exhaustion, paranoia and the questioning of authority, it's absolutely wonderful. Plus you get to act the fuck out of it.

"I wasn't phased by Rob being a first-timer either. What I took note of was that he was an experienced editor. We haven't shot scenes that won't be used, because Rob has been editing in his head as we've gone along. I've had a very real sense of working towards a cohesive visual end with *THE BUNKER*, and my character is the one that should freak out the audience the most. The plot is set up to make you think I'm the hero figure. Without revealing too much, my part is really a clever piece of misdirection



intended to make the audience sit back and think, *What the hell am I watching here?* *THE BUNKER* is unadorned and old-fashioned in the best respects while being a highly original and very weird double genre attack. Steven Spielberg's *DUEL* is one of my favorite suspense thrillers, and I feel *THE BUNKER* falls in that same, rarefied class."

"Actually, we do some terrible things to Jack's character," noted Rob Green. "I can't be too specific—let's just say it involves rats, torture, and lots of seeping blood! I have at least two sequences in the film that rely on what I call 'The Val Lewton Walk.' By that I mean I

follow one particular character for a long time down a dark tunnel so you never know where the menace or shock is going to come from, or at what time. There are certain genre cliches you must use because the audience expects them and they like that comforting aspect. I haven't gone out of my way to copy or avoid such tried and tested jolts—I've just focused on the story and decided what it needs to get the best fright response. The confined, dank, and creepy bunker space is a gift in that department and, if it all works out, *THE BUNKER* will be controversial, edgy, smart, and terrifying."

CFQ



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as THE MUMMY RETURNS and TOMB  
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# THE MUMMY RETURNS

## *But You Already Knew That, Didn't You?*

By Douglas Eby

Once upon a time, in the halcyon days when film stock rendered only two colors, black and white, and moviegoers, when they were seeking 90 minutes worth of chills, turned without fail to the Universal logo ('round about 1932, in other words), the reigning monster house released its first version of THE MUMMY. Something of a recapitulation of the previous year's DRACULA (right down to the same *Swan Lake* opening theme), the film was an atmospheric blend of doomed love and moody chills, hinged to the charismatic performance of Boris Karloff as the driven priest Imhotep.

Come the '90s, and suddenly Universal is re-examining its line-up of classic monsters, seeing in it a marketing goldmine. When THE MUMMY was tapped to be reintroduced to a newer, younger audience, director Stephen Sommers recalled how his vision went beyond even what the front-office was envisioning.

"They assumed they were going to be doing a remake," he said. "When I came in, I said, 'Well, I don't want to remake it; I want to completely redo it.' I love the original, but what's the point? The original's really great, but you need new special effects, and I wanted to take it in a more action-adventure direction."

The result was THE MUMMY, a 1999 release that startled (and sometimes repelled) purists with its unabashed, action-adventure atmosphere, but that thrilled audiences who didn't give a fig about film history, but cared deeply about getting a healthy return of fun for their movie-going dollars. The upshot: Sommers' thrill-ride update became one of the surprise hits of

that year, and the inevitable sequel was put on immediate 'go' status. The resulting follow-up, THE MUMMY RETURNS, was unveiled on May 4th.

Set some ten years after the events of the first film, the sequel focuses on now-married adventurers Rick and Evie O'Connell (Brendan Fraser and Rachel Weisz), and their struggle to free their son Alex (Freddie Boath) from the grips of the reincarnated Anck-Su-Namun, who believes the boy may lead to the rebirth of the Egyptian god Isis. Sommers' hopes his new direction for the venerable series will hold for the sequel. According to star Brendan Fraser, though, the film will also boast much "leavened humor." Sommers himself referred to one of his "favorite horror movies of all time, JAWS," and noted, "There's some great levity in it: 'We need a bigger boat.' I'm not interested in straight horror or slasher."

One of the changes from the original is the addition of new locations, including London. "I thought that would be a way to open it up, to change it," Sommers said. "And then I had this idea of a lost oasis. The story came about that they're in search of this lost oasis, so they'll have desert, London, and the jungle. I thought, That will really open this movie up. And I think that's part of the reason this is so much bigger than the first one."

Although shooting again at London's Shepperton Studios, Sommers said, "It was all new temples and locations. We really wanted to make a movie that was better and bigger than the first." He said they used some of the pillars



**MEN OF ACTION:** Brendan Fraser (left) is back for more of director Stephen Sommers' "leavened humor" in THE MUMMY RETURNS. Meanwhile, WWF superstar Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson (right) makes his debut as the Scorpion King, an ancient adversary who will be going on to his own feature project.



**LOVE RENEWED:** Arnold Vosloo as Imhotep and Patricia Velazquez as Anck-Su-Namun reunite to continue their forbidden love.

and statuary again, having saved the molds, but “basically, everything’s different.”

ILM was heavily involved in the production for visual effects, “just like on the last one,” said Sommers. He notes VFX supervisor John Berton was on the set every day. “For the first one, I was talking to him as I was writing the script. And I was always calling up to ILM and talking to various people. You may assume that’s to see if ILM can do things, but that’s not the case at all. Whenever John would say, ‘Yeah, we can do that,’ I’d push the delete button, because if they can do it now, by the time the movie hits the theatre in a year and a half, that special effect will be in five other

“We were given the task of designing this creature from the ground up. That was great, because it allowed us to use our art directors and model makers to guide us in making a very complicated, interesting creature, while at the same time involving the computer graphics artists in a way that we could really use to our advantage... We were pushing the envelope in places where we might not have gone if we just looked at [this project] from the standpoint of

movies. What you want is for ILM to go, ‘Well, we don’t know how to do that; let me have a think about it;’ or say, ‘We think we can develop the software over the course of the movie.’ That’s what you really want.”

In an interview for VFXPro.com about making the first film, Berton commented on the creation of the film’s lead villain, Imhotep, a shambling mass of mouldering CGI bones prior to taking on his final, Arnold Vosloo incarnation.

what we had sitting in our toolbox. By designing the mummy in-house, we were able to create something like Imhotep, which was really over-the-top compared to what people might expect.”

Berton also explained that Imhotep actor Arnold Vosloo was “put into the motion capture suit and we had him reenact all the movements he did in the background plates so that we had a baseline motion that was Arnold Vosloo. When you see this desiccated guy that’s nothing but bones and guts walking around, the reason he moves and acts like Arnold is because he is Arnold.”

Sommers notes he also consulted ILM for creative ideas for the follow-up. “They were doing this motion capture on the first movie, and in the computer were all these skeletons, and they looked so cool and reminded me of JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS. And I thought, ‘how can we put a twist on that?’ and John and I were spitballing, and I thought, ‘We’ll go to a jungle. What about these little pygmies? What if they’re pygmy skeletons?’ So that evolved

**REBUILDING THE GRANDEUR:** While many of the more ambitious locales were built at London’s Shepperton Studios (above and below), director Sommers (right, on location) couldn’t avoid returning cast and crew to Morocco for some authentic, desert atmosphere.



into these pygmy, corpse-like skeleton things that were worth the price of admission alone.”

New to the film is an additional adversary, the Scorpion King, played by wrestler Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson. Sommers notes they had decided to cast Johnson “before he did SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, or was on the cover of *Newsweek* and all that. He was obviously very famous within the WWF and their fan base, but after we cast him, his popularity just kept escalating. Mainly, he just seemed so dang charming; he wasn’t just a guy with muscle, he’s really good looking and well-spoken. You can’t be that charming and not be sharp. He was just right for the role.

“When I created this character, I knew

continued on page 31



## THE MUMMY RETURNS

# Brendan Fraser

If anyone knows about films that blend action and humor, Brendan Fraser—star of *DUDLEY DO-RIGHT*, *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE* and, just for variety, *GODS AND MONSTERS*—does. So when he promises that *THE MUMMY RETURNS* will deliver “even more of that kind of adventure and fun” that audiences loved in the first film, you can presume he knows from whence he speaks.

Having originated the role of Rick O’Connell, gung-ho and occasionally foolhardy adventurer, Fraser relishes being a part of “a particular brand of horror genre that, turned on its ear with the right dose of leavened humor, makes people feel like we’re not taking them, or ourselves, too seriously.” He says he’s hopeful the sequel “has not lost that spirit. We’ve got kind of that ‘getting-to-know-you stuff’ out of the way with the first film. Now, we know where the strengths lie and we’re able to focus our attention on those areas.

“And this is so smart: they got John Berton with ILM back on board to do all the effects. And the technology—even since the first one, which doesn’t seem that long ago—has redoubled itself. I’m not going to pretend to know exactly how it worked the first time around, or this time, but I know Ray Harryhausen would be very proud of it.”

Fraser claimed that working in an effects scene gave him the sense of “working in my element because it’s about relying on your imagination and creating what will later become a two-person scene, or person and creature scene. It’s kind of going for a lot of play-acting fun, the kind of behavior that got me kicked out of class a lot. But you know that’s going to get married to an image later on.”

Making the sequel was “like going back for another semester of college. Yes, we had the same designers and the same cameramen turning the wheels, and the same cast. And they were wise not to cheat and shoot in Arizona,

not that that would be a bad thing, but we went back to Morocco, and the second units went all over North Africa, Tunisia, parts of India. We were going to go into Egypt, and had the support of the government up until the last minute. Then there was a sort of political fallout that had nothing to do with us, but they said we couldn’t go.”

Fraser claimed the new script “allowed the characters to develop for ten years of their lives, and you pick up where you left off, but with strong signals that they have all done pretty well for themselves. Rick and Evelyn are married; they have a really nice house; Rick is just on the verge of actually forming the words, ‘Okay, I’ve had enough of this adventure shit,’ and being ready to hang up his guns, when they make one more discovery. And they realize it’s not just for fun this time; there are higher stakes: The hero and heroine need to save the world. But first, they have to rescue their eight-year-

old boy. Freddie Boath plays our son. He was funny and gregarious, and a walking almanac with knowledge of the first film. Like every other kid, he saw it like 42 times, no kidding—could quote passages from it.”

Fans of the previous film are going to have more trivia to bone up on, in particular a backstory that ties O’Connell to the world of Imhotep. “The film starts off in a very dramatic world of infinite possibilities,” Fraser noted. “There’s a great warrior, and he angers Anubis, and the great god didn’t take highly to that at all. So he got sucked into the ground, and an oasis in the desert sprung up around it, to tempt travelers. Then once they were there, of course, they perish. No one gets out of there alive. That’s the lost oasis we’re all looking for, where the fabled Scorpion King was said to be buried.”

In an interview, director Stephen Sommers commented he originally wrote Rick O’Connell as a “young, swashbuck-

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“This is mostly about stamina. Don’t act. Quit acting. Just *be* there.”

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ling, Errol Flynn kind of hero, and Brendan is just like that.”

Hearing the comment, Fraser admitted, “Stephen is very kind to say that.” Asked if he had used any film or literary role models for developing his character, he said, “Honestly, I just looked toward what Stephen wrote to create the character. There’s a long tradition of this kind of role being played as having a sense of obligation and being duty-bound, and I tried to incorporate that into my interpretation of the part. But moreover, I just had to pay attention to what the story told me, and rest assured this guy had the ability to see everyone through the situation safely. You’ve got to be careful you don’t come off as a big Boy Scout, you know. The guy surprises himself, that he gets away with the stuff he does.” Laughing, the actor concluded, “He’s able to take a real walloping and still walk away from it.”

Fraser views this kind of heroic role as “more about burning calories. It’s not the movie where two people stand around and talk to each other. You’re always on the run, in a vehicle, on an animal, hanging from wires, deflecting blows, throwing things. It just has a dynamic quality to it. The appetite and expectations that people have for films nowadays is very genre-oriented, and you can’t expect to not deliver the goods without expecting to lose interest.

“One of the results of having the story set in the 1930s, is that it gives a sense that anything can be possible. I think Stephen was wise to steer clear of the issue of world war and the politics of the age—the economics and the breakdown and social strife, and how the world was tooling up for something terrible to happen—to just take advantage of what the period offered and let that be the backdrop for us.”

Fraser has created a wide range of roles in film and on stage, and has university training in acting. But his role as Rick was “mostly about stamina, in a lot of ways. Just don’t act; quit acting, just be there. Stephen didn’t do too many takes, which was wise. Some directors are insecure and shoot all day long. But he couldn’t do that, he had a massive budget to work with; he has to pay respect to the story, and juggle that with the expectations of the studio. I don’t want to decry it, but it’s hard work. It’s like it’s fun, ‘cause I’m doing all this and look: I’m under water. But then it’s like, *Yeah, but I really am under water.* I could drown.

“There are many ways to risk life and limb doing this kind of activity, but that’s the character: a guy who treads a very perilous trail, and follows a rather dark muse. And there are people in the world who do that, are thrill-seeking adventure people, or adrenaline junkies: Can’t help themselves; jump off cliffs in parachutes.”

Fraser doesn’t count himself among those, though. “Are you kidding?” he said. “The big thrill for me was coming home to see if the dogs still remembered me.”

—Douglas Eby

## THE MUMMY RETURNS

# Arnold Vosloo

**A**rnold Vosloo, who plays Imhotep, the Mummy himself, in both *THE MUMMY* and *THE MUMMY RETURNS*, noted that reprising the role in the sequel has been a “completely different experience. It’s very strange. What the reasons for that are, I’m not sure; maybe it has to do with my changing. It’s hard to pinpoint, but I was amazed how unlike making the first one it was.

“[Director Stephen Sommers said] a very smart thing: ‘A successful sequel is one that’s the same, but different.’ I think that’s right. A radical departure wouldn’t work. But I think everybody fine-tuned what went before. All the more astonishing, then, that making the movie was so different. I think the most important thing was the movie was kind of bigger than we were. This thing has taken over, and now we just have to surf this wave.

“Otherwise,” he added with a laugh, “we die.”

In an interview (*CFQ 31:6*) about making *THE MUMMY*, Vosloo commented, “If this movie works, it’ll change my life.” Asked if that has happened, he replied, “Yeah, definitely. Suddenly you’re in contention for different things; you’re allowed to get out on the lingerie level with the elevator door open; you get entré into a different kind of deal. I suppose the smart thing is to utilize that, and find the right thing to do. I didn’t work between the two movies on anything else. All sorts of things came my way, but nothing I thought was unique. There were two scripts I read: one was *THE GIFT*, but Keanu got that part; another was called *THE MEXICAN*, and I think James Gandolfini got the part. The parts went to good guys, but the point is, it’s really easy for me to go out now and do a load of B-movies and make the money, but I think it’s time to just wait for the right thing.”

Vosloo noted he just finished up some work with ILM related to effects shots, and said there wasn’t more bluescreen work for him to do. “It was more intensive because the technology in the two years has changed so dramatically. It’s almost a whole new set of problems to overcome to make it more realistic, or more like me. The danger, of course, with all that stuff is that it becomes like *HOLLOW MAN*, all these great ef-



fects, but there’s no story.” In contrast, he feels the quality of story with *THE MUMMY RETURNS* definitely passes muster. “I think it’s just a much more satisfying movie,” he said. “It’s like a movie that’s grown up. And Steve Sommers is a hell of a director. He’s like a new Zemeckis. He’s awesome.”

Vosloo also thinks the way Sommers wrote the script “is perfect. The thread with my character carries through to the oh-so-treacherous end. I’m very happy with the movie and the character. For number three, maybe we’ll do something else,” he laughed. A fan of the horror genre, Vosloo said he wished there was “more stuff, and that it was less of an underground thing. But we’ll get there.”

With considerable experience in live theater, Vosloo has found acting in these films has both drawn on his background, and been kind of a vacation. “It’s a bit of both. Steve Sommers always says he wants me to do the ‘lazy man’s version of Shakespeare’ as the mummy. It draws on that, but at the same time...the trick, especially with Imhotep, is to really try to make a man from another era. To forget about cars and television and whatever. It does draw on that theater experience in creating a character.”

He thinks the new film will be positive for his career: “It will consolidate who I am to people in the business: ‘Oh, yeah, Arnold Vosloo, a great bad guy; let’s find something for him.’ Sooner or later, someone will take a chance on me.”

Vosloo agreed with producer Jim Jacks’s perception that there was a very high level of expectation in making the sequel. “Everyone is very adamant about making it a better movie than the first one, which is interesting. I think we got it, I really do.”

—Douglas Eby

he had to be some guy who could basically kick the shit out of O'Connell and Imhotep. He had to be a big, bad-ass guy and really feared, before the special effects even kick in. It's a small role; he doesn't speak English, like Imhotep." The character was so engaging that he is set to appear in his own spin-off feature.

Developing the two MUMMY films took a lot of research. "I have every A&E and History Channel and Learning Channel videotape," Sommers said. "People love ancient Egypt, the Pharaohs, and mummies and Pyramids and all that. So I tried to base everything in the script on real myths, or come from somewhere. The only thing we make up is a mummy coming back to life." In the story, while vacationing in Egypt, the O'Connells, Rick (Brendan Fraser) and Evelyn (Rachel Weisz), discover an ancient gold bracelet, which their young son Alex (Freddie Boath) puts on, discovering it has paranormal powers. Sommers noted that mummies were buried "with all kinds of sacred amulets and bracelets and necklaces. Basically, the bracelet becomes the map. There always has to be a treasure map to get them to where they're going. But this isn't literally a map — you don't read it; it's a pretty spectacular special effect: when you put it on, you can't get it off, and you see things that others can't."

Alphaville Productions, led by producers Jim Jacks and Sean Daniel, realized both the first movie and now THE MUMMY RETURNS. "We all had a good experience on the first movie," said Jacks, "so everybody, I think, wanted to be back. It was tricky closing everyone's deal. Only Rachel [Weisz] and Arnold Vosloo had options, so getting everybody else required negotiations and substantial amounts of money."

One of the prime locations for THE MUMMY was again used for the new film: the desert area of Erfoud. In an article on making the first film ("The Mummy, Resurrected" by Joe Fordham, *CFQ* 31:6), Jacks had commented that the area had three mile-long dunes, and "looks like the end of the world." Jacks noted it's the "last trading post before you hit the major part of the Sahara desert, on the old Sahara trade route. It's very third world. They've built a better hotel since the last time we were there, so that made everyone feel better." He said one of the

production challenges was that "the weather was very bad. We had rain — in fact our second unit almost got flooded. The last time we were there, we were there almost



**"AND THEN THE MAGIC AGENT NEGOTIATED A HEALTHY BACK-END DEAL WITH .5% OF ANCILLARY MECHANDISING, AND THEY ALL LIVED PROFITABLY EVER AFTER."** Young Freddie Boath (above) becomes the center of attention as the possible reincarnation of the god Isis (and gets to dip a toe in the action waters himself, if the pic at left is to be believed). For her part, Rachel Weisz (below) gets a little closer to the supernatural than is sensible for most living beings.

nine weeks, and had one day of sand storms.

This time, we had sand storms almost every day. You just had to shoot around it. Everyone was so eager to get out of there, they were willing to work under pretty bad conditions, just so we wouldn't fall behind." Sean Daniel commented, "Morocco is a great place to shoot, but Erfoud is one of the more challenging parts of it. If you want to get out to the desert, that's where you have to go."

One difference in terms of the script is that, compared with the first film, this time the main writer was Sommers. "In the last one, we had a lot of different writers working on it for a number of years," Jacks recalled. "Basically, Stephen rewrote the first script from page one, using a couple of ideas from earlier drafts, but mostly stuff from the earlier movie. He made it into a PG-13 adventure movie. This film is a

little darker, but still PG-13; a little monsterish, more monsters and better monsters; not as much broad, slapstick humor, although we do have some, because obviously it's something Brendan is very good at. But without Kevin O'Connor, who played Benny, it did decrease dramatically."

Interviewed while making the first film, Jacks had declared they were already thinking of a sequel, and said they have been able to include some of their earlier ideas for the new film. "But as always, it was a point of departure," he said. "A lot of it didn't get used. Originally, the idea was that it would be like the first movie, but in London instead of Cairo. It would be 'the ten plagues of Egypt come to London.' Well, a couple of things came to London, but we ended up back in the desert. Stephen even figured a way to get us into a jungle, a 'lost oasis' with jungle-like vegetation, and it has a number of surprises.

That was shot in England and on sound stages, Shepperton, Pinewood and then a place called Black Forest, which is a park in London."

Will THE MUMMY RETURNS deliver the same thrills? Sean Daniel admits he feels the pressure, but, it's "good for all of us. Wait for the movie; I believe we've done good. It's interesting about this film, it's a situation where director, producers, studio, everyone is united in being enthusiastic. We're really proud of it."



# TOMB RAIDER

*Angelina Jolie Becomes Lara Croft.  
She Ain't Playing Games.*

By Alan Jones

In 1995 Core Design Limited, the British-based video game company, had already hit the charts with numerous best-selling titles like *Rick Dangerous*, *Thunderhawk*, and *Fighting Force*. But the innovative game they unveiled in May 1996 would become a landmark for the software industry, turn into one of the most consistent and best-selling game series of all time, and establish a virtual goddess who would achieve unparalleled media status as a sexy, intelligent and take-charge icon for the digital age. That game was *Tomb Raider*, and its cyber-babe star was Lara Croft.

Never before had such a versatile and powerful female character featured in a computer game—from its launch date in November 1996, *Tomb Raider* became an instant phenomenon. Lara Croft, dressed in her signature outfit of combat shorts, turquoise tank top, and Doc Marten boots, continued her archaeological adventures through *Tomb Raider II*, *Tomb Raider III*, *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*, and *Tomb Raider: Chronicles*, facing death-defying jeopardy while discovering priceless artifacts and treasures in the secret, booby-trapped burial chambers of dingy pyramids.

Each title continued to break records; to date, the combined *Tomb Raider* series has sold well over 30 million units worldwide and won a host of industry awards.

With vast sales, and a sexy Lara Croft invading global public consciousness to an unprecedented degree, Core Design found their creation inevitably fuelling interest in Hollywood. "It was just after the launch of *Tomb Raider II* when there was talk about a movie and Hollywood came knocking on our doors," said Adrian Smith, younger brother of Core Design managing director Jeremy Healy-Smith. "The first offer came from a famous animation studio but we really didn't think it was the right route to pursue as it wouldn't have signaled too much of a quantum leap from the game itself. However, the offer made us realize the potential of granting a movie license to the right studio. We just had to make sure we weighed up all the pros and cons before choosing which people to work with. Uppermost in all our minds was the fear of putting the creative control of *Tomb Raider* in someone else's hands, so we knew it was vital to pick the right studio to nurture the concept and Lara's image. There was no way we were going to let our property

end up on movie screens looking like SUPER MARIO BROS. or STREETFIGHTER!"

By 1996, Core Design had become a fully-owned subsidiary of the Eidos Interactive Group. One of the many proposals the company received came from Paramount Pictures and veteran independent Hollywood producer Lawrence Gordon (*DIE HARD*) and his business partner Lloyd Levin (*BOOGIE NIGHTS*). "I was very familiar with the game as I played it a lot," said Levin. "We pursued the movie rights because it had a real character at its center and the game storylines were very cinematic in approach. TOMB RAIDER offered something that hadn't been seen in movies before: it had exotic adventure, thrilling action, treasure hunts, and mortal danger—all given a very modern spin with a unique character at the foreground who embodied the spirit of contemporary cool."

Levin continued, "We acquired the movie license in 1997 primarily because we thought and Core Design stuff didn't want to hear. Other

**THE ACTIVE RICH:** In the world of TOMB RAIDER, royal blood means you're young, attractive, and pursuing a multi-disciplinary career that takes you to the far corners of the world. On Angelina Jolie, it looks good.







**GONE BEYOND DIGITS:** The computer game Lara provided the initial inspiration (Jolie is above, her prototype is on the right), but director Simon West sought to give the character a depth only hinted at in the source material.

seemed to be offering them the world and making unrealistic promises to secure the rights. We told them we wanted to take it very slowly, and assured them we wouldn't disrupt the mythology they had worked so hard to build up. We told them we wanted to extend their brainchild in terms of Lara's personal life, and the kind of inner stories she could be involved in. Every project takes time to develop and such setbacks come with the territory. Yet we guaranteed that no matter how long it would take to get the property exactly right, we would always remain committed and enthusiastic. We wanted to nurture Lara and do the right things with her—we did not go after *Tomb Raider* simply because it was the latest hot property to pursue."

Once Gordon and Levin had secured the *Tomb Raider* movie rights, they started developing scripts that would rise to the potential of the basic concept and boldly encompass Lara's heritage rather than merely exploit it. But, although various draft screenplays of TOMB RAIDER were written, the whole project didn't properly snap into focus until Simon West came on board as the director. West, a British-born rock video and commercials director, joined the mainstream film industry in 1997 with CON AIR, and followed that action blockbuster with the big budget thriller, THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER.

West remarked, "After THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER I was determined to di-

rect something completely opposite to the dark claustrophobic tone of that picture. I wanted fun, fantasy, and imagination so I could exercise all the other muscles I hadn't used in my movie work so far. I'd heard about the TOMB RAIDER project on the Hollywood network, but I turned it down twice because I had my own definite ideas about what angles should be explored with it. Then, around Christmas 1999, I was offered the chance to direct the project again. I thought about it more seriously this time and decided to read the latest commissioned script (written by Patrick Massett and John Zinman). I didn't like it. It was just what you'd expect—RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK with a woman instead of Harrison Ford. Plus, it had a very clichéd view of England that put it squarely in the AUSTIN POWERS bracket: tea with the Queen at Buckingham palace, red buses etc. I told Larry and Lloyd that I would only direct TOMB RAIDER if I could keep the title and Lara but change everything else and start from scratch.

"I looked at classic quest movies and big epics like DR. ZHIVAGO and LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, watched every documentary on ancient civilizations, and read every book on mysticism, sacred geometry, alchemic artifacts, religious rites, astrology, and planet alignment theories. The story evolved from all these strands and I wrote the screenplay drafts between Christmas 1999 and May 2000."

The plot West conjured up involves a secret organization called the Illuminati, who are searching for an ancient clock that is the key to opening both time and space. With the clock as their guide, the Illuminati must find two halves of a mystical triangle which, if combined, will stop



time, bring their evil ancestors back to life, and change the fate of mankind forever. When Lara Croft finds the clock hidden in Croft Manor—her late father, Lord Croft, acquired the icon during one of his archaeological digs—it sets her on the most dangerous quest of her exploring career.

With a 48-hour deadline before all the planets align for a full total eclipse—when the sacred triangle's power will be at its most potent—Lara must first find the two halves and then stop Manfred Powell, the Illuminati's evil emissary. The high stakes mission takes her initially to Cambodia, where the Tomb of the Dancing Light holds one half of the puzzle, and then to Siberia, where the Tomb of Ten Thousand Shadows hides the

other. With her trusty computer-savvy sidekick Bryce, Lara takes on Powell, his assistant Mr. Pimms, and mercenary archaeologist Alex West to save the universe from prophesized disaster.

"I made a conscious effort to distance the story as far from the INDIANA JONES trilogy as possible," said West. "That's why I stayed away from sand, snakes, pyramids, rats, bugs, or anything yellow. There was no way I was going to spend a year of my life working in an environment I'd seen copied a hundred times already. Luckily, the game was set in modern times so it wasn't going to be a '30s period piece, anyway. That immediately gave me the advantage of using all the new technologies available. I deliberately made the central themes the sort of New Age and mystical phenomena we don't properly understand, rather than have Lara just fighting nasty Nazis. It was an exciting challenge reinventing the fantasy adventure genre for an audience comprised of people who know nothing about the game, as well as ardent game players themselves. I didn't think it would be fair to ignore the game players totally so, for them, I've woven into the screenplay lots of little coded messages and intriguing puzzles that they will be able to unpick and decipher and, if they are very clever, work out what's going

ground, everything is pretty much plausible. I push it now and again as there are weird phenomena in the world we can't explain. But when the characters go underground, into the tombs, I changed those rules completely. The gloves are off and almost anything can happen."

Despite reports that various actresses from Sandra Bullock to Denise Richards were in the running to play Lara Croft, the truth is West only ever wanted Angelina Jolie for the pivotal role. He said, "It was a one-horse race. If Angelina didn't do it,

as her character had many emotional and heartfelt scenes to tackle. Therefore we not only needed a stunning looking woman but al-



**SPANNING TIME AND SPACE:** Jolie's father, Jon Voight (above, with Rachel Appleton as a young Lara), helped make filming *TOMB RAIDER* in such far-flung locations as Siberia (below) a bit more of a family affair.

"I stayed away from sand, snakes, pyramids, bugs, or anything yellow. No way I'll spend a year of my life doing something I'd seen copied a hundred times."

—Director Simon West on *Keeping It Fresh*

on long before the rest of the audience."

He continued, "In many ways, I envisioned Lara Croft as a female James Bond for the new millennium. But we were not constrained like Bond, and that's what appealed to me when I decided to write the script. It was a totally open brief. Nor was I constrained by reality, although I did set certain rules for the movie. Above

I couldn't think of anyone else who would be suitable. All of Angelina's performances have been a heady combination of gorgeously voluptuous womanhood but with brains, wit, and good humor. Those were precisely the attributes Lara had to have and Angelina completely embodied them. We all agreed Lara had to be more than an action cartoon cut-out

so a great actress who could pull such scenes off in a totally believable fashion. I firmly believed only Angelina would be able to act her way out of tight dramatic corners while never losing Lara's sexual appeal or winning qualities. I also instinctively knew Angelina would satisfy the demands of the games fans and

continued on page 38



## TOMB RAIDER

# Sets, Stunts, and Special Effects

*Making the World a Bit More  
Dangerous for Adventurers.*

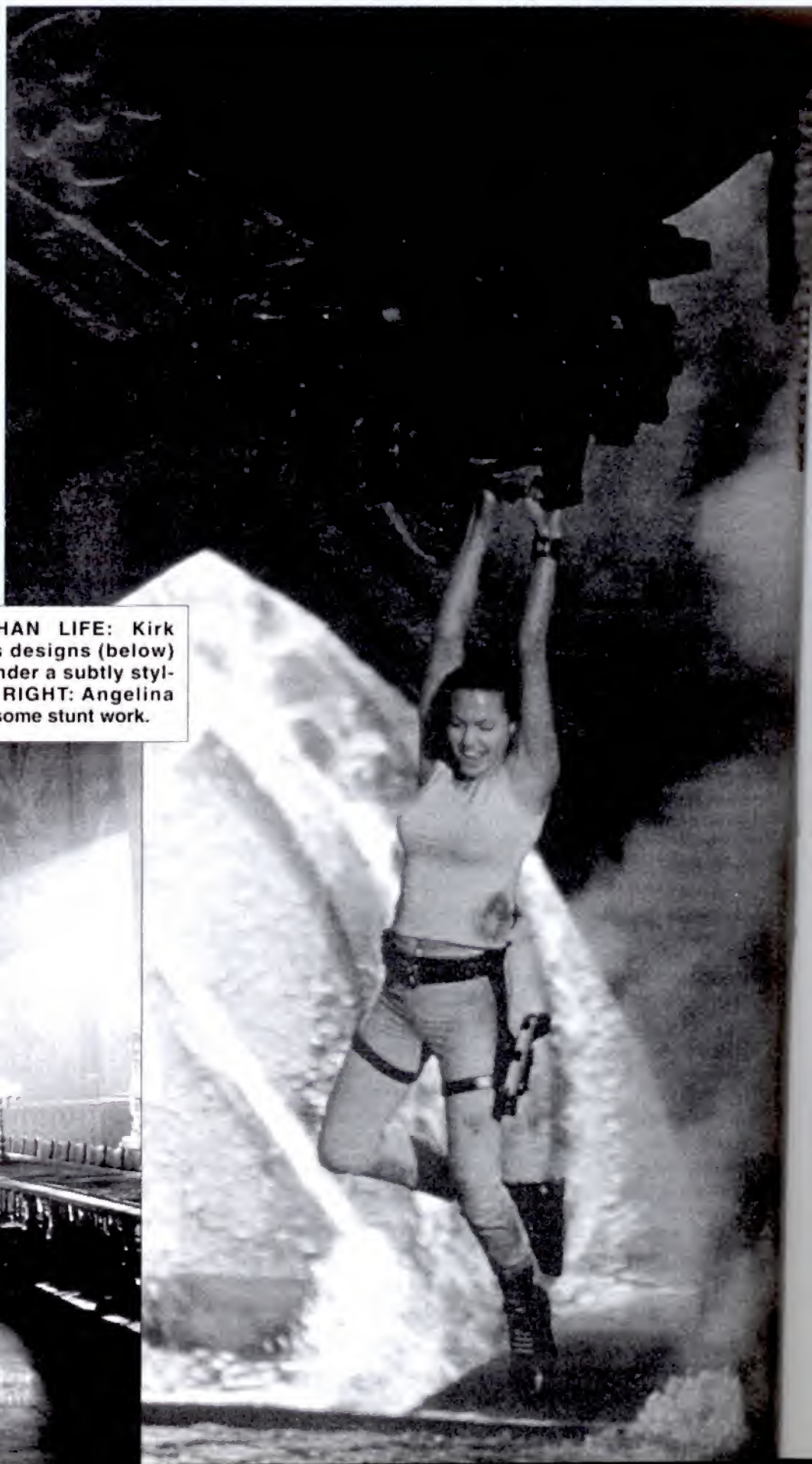
*By Alan Jones*

**T**OMB RAIDER was the biggest assignment, both in scope and scale, that production designer Kirk Petruccelli had ever undertaken. Petruccelli, who designed ANACONDA, BLADE, THE PATRIOT, and MYSTERY MEN, called his TOMB RAIDER look "Super-contemporary—a mix of pre-antiquity and classic Tudor architecture—smashed through with attainable modern." He added, "Simon West didn't want anything stereotypical. Although the design is quite stylized, he was adamant nothing should look too futuristic but capture 'the advanced fantastic, rooted in modern reality.'"

The major design challenges

for Petruccelli were the three enormous sets that had to be built at Pinewood Studios. He explained, "One half of the main hall at Croft Manor had to be typical Elizabethan in the grand historical manner, with an imposing staircase and gallery. The other half—divided by a floor to ceiling glass wall—had to house Lara's base of computer operations, complete with high-tech control panels. The fittings, like the fireplace, in the first half were constructed out of rubber so Angelina and the stuntmen wouldn't hurt themselves if they crashed into anything during the bungee ballet sequence where Lara takes on Powell's henchmen. The lighting was the most important part of the

**LARGER THAN LIFE:** Kirk Petruccelli's designs (below) sought to render a subtly stylized reality. **RIGHT:** Angelina Jolie assays some stunt work.



Space Age half so Lara could control night and day within that environment."

The two other set constructions were built in the 007 sound stage at Pinewood. Both *The Orrery*, housed within the Tomb of Ten Thousand Shadows, and the vast temple interior of the Tomb of the Dancing Light occupied Europe's largest soundstage. Petruccelli continued, "The Orrery was devised as a minimalist grotto using a mainly black, blue, and white color scheme inspired by Iceland's glacier-rich landscape. Within that we had to construct the giant, fully operational, metallic solar system on which the main protagonists battle and climb around in the climax. It had a 180-foot wingspan and had to travel in four different directions at between three and fifteen miles an hour."

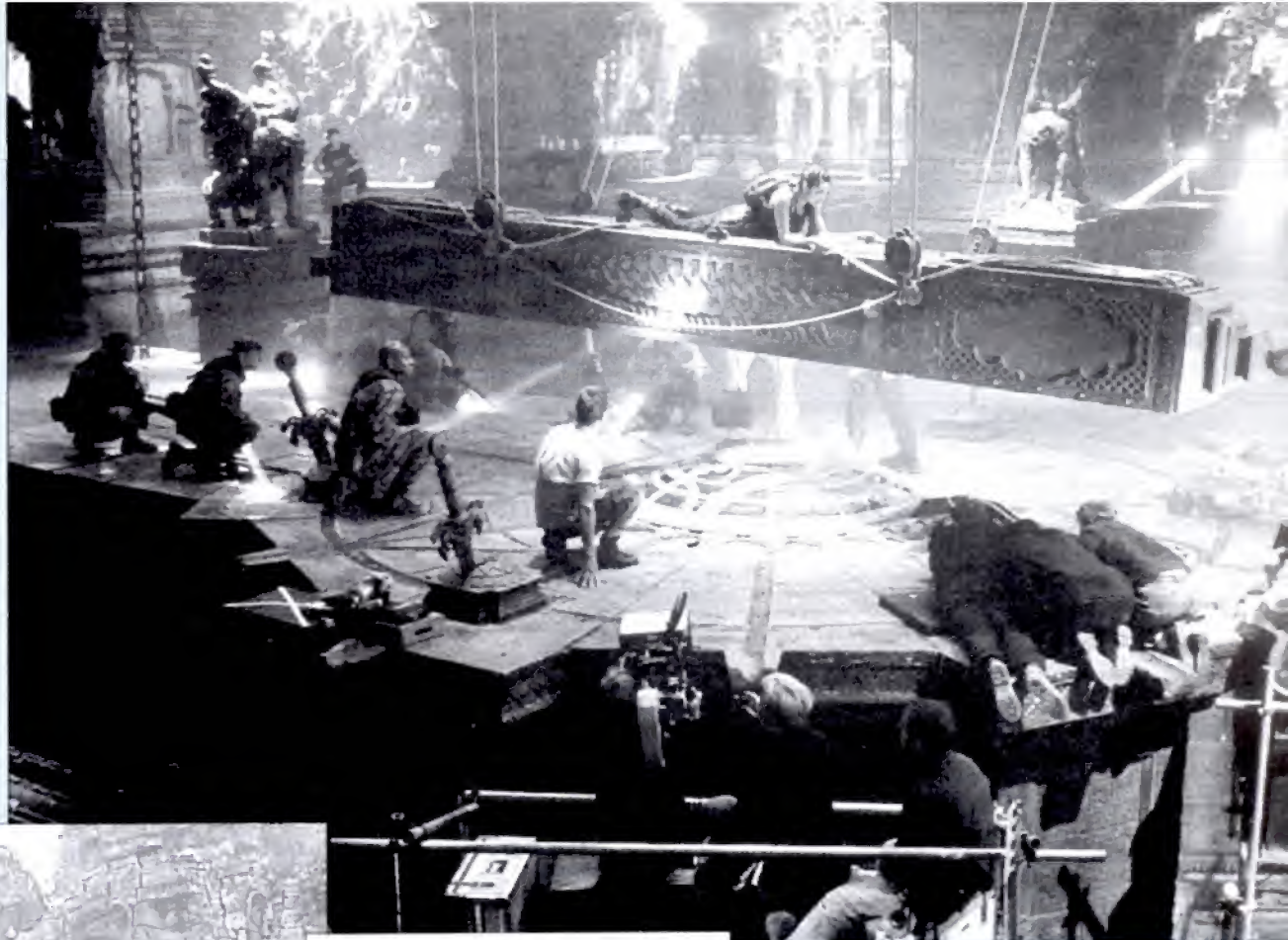
But Petruccelli's crowning achievement, one that left cast, crew, and set visitors simply dumbstruck, was the Tomb of the Dancing Light. It's in this vast set that Lara swings from the roof on a log and pierces an urn on the huge Buddha altar. This action causes a column of liquid mercury to flood everywhere and bring the stone monkey statues (inspired by the actual Cambodian Khmer monkey god) lining the walls, to life. Said Petruccelli, "The Tomb of the Dancing Light took 16 weeks to build, based on 250 illustrations with 30 set designers overseeing the construction and 300 plasterers, painters, carpenters, and riggers working around the clock. In terms of size, detail, and the time frame, it is the biggest set I've ever had to design. My art directors and I went on a [research trip] to Cambodia to view the temple at Angkor Wat, so we could include the architectural motifs and grey sandstone coloring in the set. No overt color was used, so as not to detract from Lara's spectacular arrival. We made the Tomb a cruciform shape in the classic church design, then dug into it to allow for the different levels Simon needed for his action backdrop. None of the hieroglyphics or prayer iconography is based on anything we saw in Cambodia, for fear of insulting their sacred religions. You must always be

cognizant of that side of things when you invade another culture. The whole set was flexible and interchangeable, with built-in lighting, so Simon could stage the action in a number of areas to always make it look visually interesting."

The chain reaction in the tomb involved



not only Petruccelli's design know-how, but also a complex interaction between stunt coordinator Simon Crane, digital effects supervisor Steve Begg, and special effects supervisor Chris Corbould. Corbould, who worked on *THE MUMMY* and the last three Bond movies, said, "While the mercury cascade and the monkey soldiers are all digitally created, we had to destroy large parts of the set to make it look as realistic as possible—definitely the most complicated sequence, because we moved in real time and shot in continuity to avoid any nightmare



**ANCIENT MAJESTY:** Petruccelli based *TOMB RAIDER*'s temples on Cambodian design (left). **ABOVE:** Filming the climactic stunt in the Tomb of the Dancing Light.

logistics. This took us two months to shoot.

"The sequence containing the most effects work was *The Orrery*. The metallic solar system had to revolve on four different axes, containing three planets each, at varying speeds. The whole construction weighed 28 tons and was powered by four hydraulic motors, linked back to a computer system and a power pack as big as a small truck, to ensure the movement was exactly the same each time. The hardest thing was getting the spinning planets not to

crash together, as there was only a six-inch gap between them. This was the very first sequence we started planning because we knew how complicated it was going to be."

After getting the triangle piece from the center of the sun, Lara and Alex must get out of the Tomb by avoiding falling stalagmites. Corbould said, "Simon West wanted to increase the tension by using visuals similar to *THE MATRIX*—having the sharp rocks drop in slow motion at varying speeds from the point of view of the

characters as they run around them. This was achieved by building a circular track for a 3,000 frames-per-second photo-sonic camera travelling at 22 miles per hour past a 15-foot, falling stalagmite. It's a terrific effect that I feel outdoes any in *THE MATRIX*."

Responsible for overseeing the incredible *TOMB RAIDER* stunts was Simon Crane, stunt coordinator on *SAVING PRIVATE RYAN* and *THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH*. Crane, who also doubled as the movie's second unit director, said, "Obviously, my job is a lot easier when stars do their own stunts. But you can never allow them to take safety risks, even though they will always want to push their limits. I had to be quite strict with Angelina because if she had sustained even the slightest injury, it would have halted production. She was brilliant in the bungee ballet and triple-somersaulted 40 feet up in the air. Thanks to Chris Corbould's custom-made, hydraulic turntable camera rig, Simon could keep Angelina's face in frame as she runs around the walls, witnessing every moment of Lara's exhilaration.

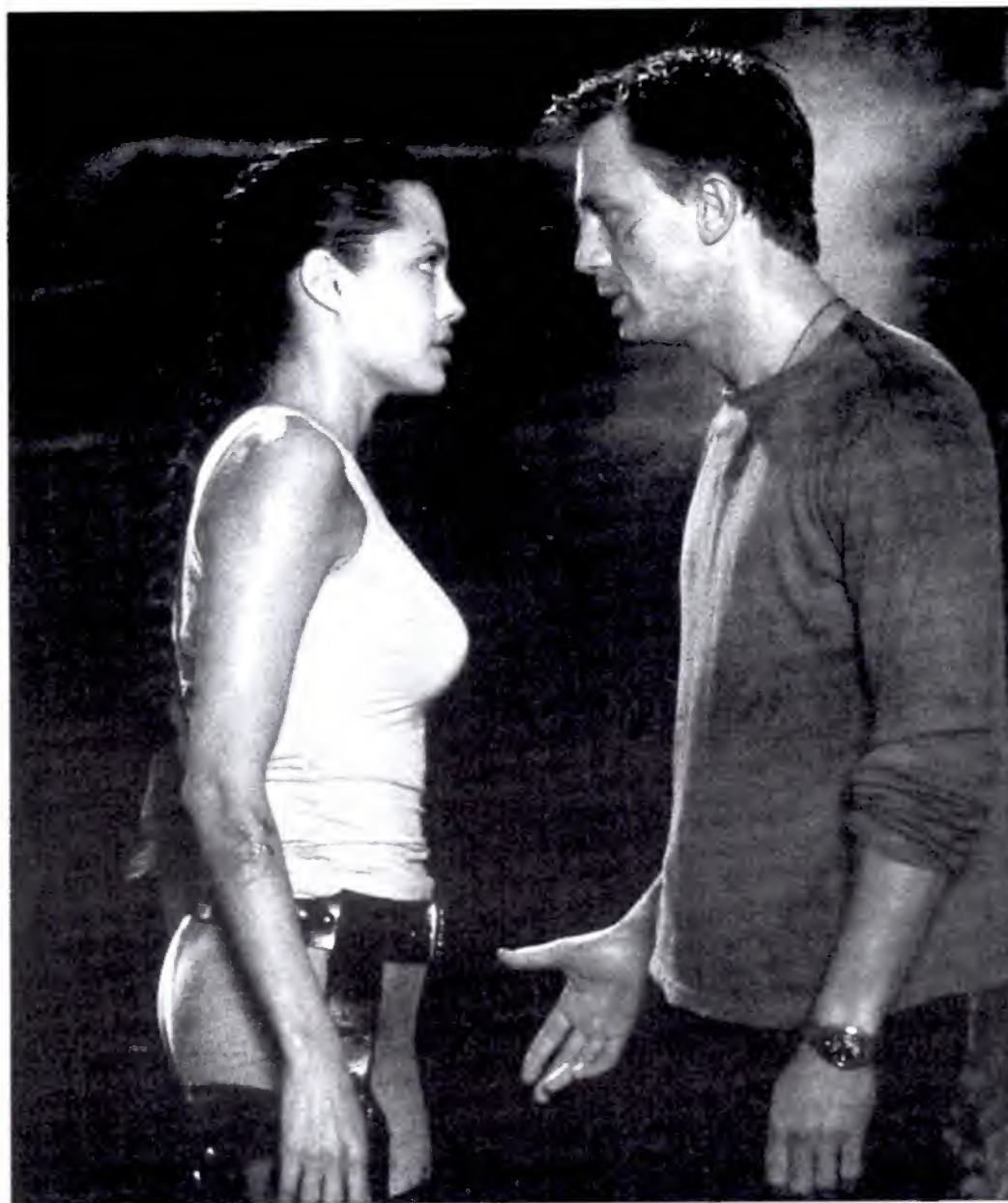
"The biggest challenge for me on the picture concerned the fact that Angelina is left-handed. So all the stunt men and women had to be trained in left-handed maneuvers. That was very tricky."

CFCQ

their preconceived ideas of what Lara looked like. I was ecstatic when she accepted the challenge.”

The daughter of actor Jon Voight, and the Oscar-winning star of *GIRL, INTERRUPTED*, *THE BONE COLLECTOR*, and *GONE IN 60 SECONDS*, Angelina Jolie said, “Playing Lara Croft is the hardest job I’ve ever done. She is very clear about herself and her goals and overly capable in an almost beyond-human way. It’s so hard to stay in a positive, healthy, clear, and brave state of mind all the time—it’s much easier to internalize and remain dark, which is what I’ve been used to playing up until now. The strange thing is, when I accepted the part, I thought it was going to be a major departure from everything else I’ve done in the past. Okay, it’s a blockbuster fantasy and I’ve never done one of those before, but the essence of Lara has turned out to be remarkably similar to some other roles I’ve played: She’s alone, focused on justice, is a little crazy in many ways, bold definitely, loves her freedom, and is very sexual. Those are traits I adore in general and themes I’ve explored in movies before. Lara is the perfect woman in my estimation.

“I initially thought the whole idea of Simon wanting someone like me was a strange one. As it represented a quantum leap into a whole new genre, I had to make sure I felt comfortable with Simon and that he was the right director to guide my performance, especially as I would have to sign a three-picture contract, including two sequels. Well, we met, and he told me exactly how he saw Lara. He explained all about the magical elements—based on real myths and legends—he brought into the film and why he wanted them there. It amazed



**BEHIND EVERY GREAT WOMAN:** Director Simon West chose British actor Daniel Craig as Croft’s occasional rival, and potential love interest, Alex West. (Wish fulfillment? You be the judge.) **BELOW:** West consults with Angelina Jolie on a shot.

me, and still does, that his two prior films had such a masculine slant, as I could see he was a director who really understood women. Once he described Lara as a warrior in a macho world, I was completely sold on playing her.”

*TOMB RAIDER* began six months of principal photography on July 31, 2000, at

London’s Pinewood Studios—with stunningly elaborate sets designed by Kirk (MYSTERY MEN) Petrucci—and continued on location in Hofn, Iceland and in the 12th century temples at Angkor Wat, Cambodia (the first movie allowed to shoot in Cambodia since *LORD JIM* in 1963). Jolie’s *TOMB RAIDER* co-stars include Iain Glen (*GORILLAS IN THE MIST*), Daniel Craig (*ELIZABETH*), Noah Taylor (*ALMOST FAMOUS*), Chris Barrie (*RED DWARF*), Justin Rhind Tutt (*THE MADNESS OF KING GEORGE*), Leslie Phillips, Richard Johnson, and her own father, Jon Voight, as Lord Croft.

Iain Glen, who plays Lara’s evil adversary Manfred Powell, accepted the role because he was very taken with the script and the storyline. He said, “I have had opportunities to make action pictures before, but I fought shy of them because I’m not particularly drawn to the genre. But it was clear from the first page that *TOMB RAIDER* was going to be in a class of its own. All the action was superbly integrated into the story and the characters just flew off the page. The more I read the script, the more I wanted to play Powell, because there were so many great character scenes to get my teeth into. Too often the villain in fantasy adventures is just a token baddie, but here Powell is intelligent and witty. I relished the fact that he was more than a match for Lara. Powell is a lawyer by trade and that made him very astute in pinpointing people’s weaknesses. He spots Lara’s Achilles heel immediately and leads her treacherously close to death in a way that’s exciting and sexy.”

As mercenary archaeologist Alex West, Lara’s occasional accomplice, sparring partner, and possible love interest, Simon West chose fast-rising British actor Daniel Craig, who won widespread



critical acclaim in the art-house hit *LOVE IS THE DEVIL*. Said Craig, "I like action films as much as anybody else and when *TOMB RAIDER* came along, I just thought, 'well, why not? Does it stop me making films that I believe in, or does it raise my profile a little bit so I might have more choice?' It was a case of thinking, *Are you going to make proper movies or just mess around?* Here was a great chance to learn about the blockbuster industry from the best in the business. I would have been mad to turn it down.

"I love playing comedy, and when I first met Simon to discuss my involvement, he told me Alex was pretty funny and doesn't take life too seriously. I thought, 'well, if I am going to make an action film, this is definitely the one to do.' I've adored playing the massive amounts of irony that comes with Alex's hard man-of-action surface. Simon told me very specifically what he wanted and I gave it to him. I do love a director who trusts you enough to let you get on with it without droning on too much about character arcs."

About his co-star Angelina Jolie, Craig said, "Angelina and I haven't had to work hard to put across the chemistry between us. It has been a breeze. She's smart, intelligent, knows what she's doing, and has really stuck her nose to the grindstone. She's ace to work with and very serious about getting it right. Sometimes with Hollywood actors you do get the impression that it's just another job. Not Angelina. She has been determined to make something special, and has put her own twist on Lara with incredible individuality and style. As a die-hard game player I can say with absolute authority that she's the perfect Lara Croft."

Cast very late in the day was Jon Voight who, as Lara's sorely-missed father, appears in numerous monochrome flashbacks to gently guide his strong-willed daughter towards the triangle puzzle with parental advice and historically-based hints. The *COMING HOME* Oscar-winner and star of *PEARL HARBOR* said, "Angie and I have talked about working together before. Originally, when we discussed this film, it



**FACE OF ADVENTURE:** An Oscar winner for her role in *GIRL, INTERRUPTED*, Angelina Jolie found herself in less clinical surroundings for the filming of *TOMB RAIDER*.

ship interfering with our tight family one."

All doubts vanished the moment Voight and Jolie had their first scenes together, as he explained. "We had this eye-to-eye talking sequence that was both intimate and magical because it's where Lord Croft's past meets Lara's present. We worked on it prior to shooting and I was amazed at her clarity and how insightful and exciting her thoughts were. She dazzled me with her professional understanding and her willingness to explore our own private relationship to add authenticity to the characters' bond. It's something to savor when you can tell your own daughter how you feel about her on film. Watching her perform up close was something else, as I could vividly see the emotional risks she was taking."

Voight continued, "*TOMB RAIDER* is a magical mystery tour primarily filled with fun, excitement and fantasy. But on so many other levels it says a lot about the human condition and culture. Not just Icelandic or Cambodian culture, but pop culture too. It is going to make audiences feel good and give them the chance to see things that are so special, precious, and magnificent in today's world. *TOMB RAIDER* is just like the films I took Angie to see when she was a little girl—ones that she found inspirational and fired her imagination. Now she's the star of one of the greatest and most highly anticipated movies of the year, and I couldn't be prouder of her than I am at this point in my life."

CFQ

*By Ross Plesset*

Consider the plight of your average ogre. There you are: isolated in your hovel, minding your own business, when all of a sudden... BAM!...you're overrun by a bunch of evicted fairy tale characters. There are unicorns lapping daintily at the watering hole, elves scurrying happily on the footpaths, and everywhere the garish glare of pixie dust. What was once grim and unbearable has become a realm of enchantment and wonder. There goes the neighborhood.

SHREK, the newest all-CG feature from Dreamworks and Pacific Data Images (PDI) (who previously co-produced ANTZ), is an innovative project that brought together an enormous amount of creative and technical talent. It tells the story of a gross and unpleasant ogre, whose swamp is invaded by displaced fairy tale characters, and who must become a reluctant hero to return his swamp to its gloomy state. Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy, and John Lithgow provided the main voices.

After nearly five years in gestation, the movie opens in theaters this month, and if certain technical details can be solved, it might be also be released in IMAX 3D this fall. "I've seen some tests that they've done in 3D that are quite spectacular," remarked co-director Andrew Adamson. "I'm certainly hoping that goes forward."

The film uses William Steig's 28-page children's book, *Shrek!* as a starting point. Naturally, though, the

tale needed to be fleshed-out extensively, a task that the screenwriting team of Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio (ALADDIN, THE ROAD TO EL DORADO) did not consider daunting. Essentially, they took Steig's anti-social ogre

and put him into a new, seemingly traditional fairy tale. "The fun of fleshing-out the plot was inventing this brand-new fairy tale which sounds like a fairy tale we're all familiar with: you know, the princess locked in a tower guarded by a dragon; the brave knight sent to rescue her by the evil regent; and then Shrek gets dragged into the middle of this against his will," related Elliott. "At every turn, rather than doing

what the traditional hero would do, he did what an ogre would do."

Much of this new material is based on inspiration that the screenwriters found in Steig's book. "In the book, the entire story is formed by the simple notion that the ogre, the classic fairy tale villain, is in fact the hero of the story," Elliott continued. "The book is a psychological journey that this character goes on, one where he goes from being incomplete to being complete. To some extent, those two notions are what informed our decisions in creating a larger story, but one which would still have the appeal of the book. The concept of the fairy tale villain as the true hero of the piece led to this idea of subverting any number of fairy tale conventions and paradigms.

"The other great thing about Shrek in the book is that this was a character who really liked himself. This notion is not what you generally see in animated fairy tales. Usually, the character is in some way

## DreamWorks, PDI, and Mike Myers Join Forces to Fracture a Few Fairy Tales





*All you need is*



*When Cute 'n' Cuddly Won't Cut It*

unhappy with himself, and he wants to change. But in the book, Shrek didn't want to change! And we had to preserve that. He had to be a character who, in the course of the story, changes, but could not be motivated to change. That led us to think, 'How does somebody change if they aren't aware that they need to change?' and that led to issues of self-identity."

SHREK screenwriters Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio have high regards for their source material. William Steig's 28-page book *Shrek!* Elliott explained why the book appeals to him:

"The book itself has a lot of very Jungian symbolism in it with basically every character Shrek meets. Shrek meets a near-sighted witch, and the myopia is the symbolism of somebody who can see more than a normal person can. Then he meets the talking donkey, and in fairy tales, a talking animal is a symbol of wisdom.

"There's a point where Shrek swallows lightning, which is obviously enlightenment. He goes into a forest and he sees a

own armor that he's put up around himself.

"All of the characters that he's met along the way are incarnations of himself. Ultimately, where he meets the ugly princess who he perceives as beautiful, that's the idea of completion. So the Steig book is really an inward psychological journey that is externalized through fairy tales. You look at it and say, 'Oh, so an ogre is basically an incomplete person or a child who needs to become an adult.'"

Among the first additions made to the story were villain Lord Farquaad and the 1,000+ fairy tale figures who encroach on Shrek's swamp. "Because ogres are conventional villains, Shrek has shut himself off from the world outside," Elliott explained. "Since the world treats him badly, he's decided

the concept of him wanting no more fairy tales [laughs]...Farquaad, in his mania to get rid of fairy tale creatures, was trying to drive Shrek out as well.

"...Obviously, this movie will be perceived as a slam against Disney, which I think is unfortunate, because it's really a slam against the notion of these fairy tale creatures and conventions being owned by any



**THE SIMPLE LIFE:** Comfortable in his isolation, Shrek (below) finds himself reluctantly calling upon the better aspects of his nature to help a group of fairy tale characters who have been forced into exile. **RIGHT:** Top members of the SHREK crew consult during a motion approval session. From left to right: Supervising Animator Raman Hui; Directors Andrew Adamason and Vicky Jenson; and Co-Art Director Guillame Aretos.



single storyteller. I don't know anybody who works in the animation field who doesn't love the Disney movies. But what happens is, you look at them and say, 'But there's another story that can be told about Pinocchio or a different way to approach that story.' And in a large extent you really don't get to, because Disney now owns that mental real estate in a way that makes it very difficult for anybody else. That was sort of the joke with Farquaad: he basically owned the mental real estate."

Rounding out the main characters are a donkey and a princess, both of whom already exist in Steig's book, albeit in different forms. The donkey, who only appears on two pages of the book, is the

sign that says:

'Harken, stranger,

Shun the danger!

If you plan to stay the same,

You'd best go back from whence you came.'

That's kind of the key to the story. Shrek's a character who wants to stay the way he is, but really, the second he leaves the swamp and steps out into the larger world, he's going to have to change. We know that the hollow suit of armor that he fights is his

to reject the world. Obviously, then, he had to be motivated out of the swamp by the actions of others, and that led to the concept of Farquaad, a more extreme version of Shrek. Shrek looks at the world and thinks the world is screwed up because of the way they react to him, and so he says, 'I reject the world.' Whereas Farquaad looks at the world and thinks the world is screwed up because of how they treat him, and so he decides that he's going to change the world to the way that he wants it to be. That led to

film's comic side-kick, hellbent on being Shrek's friend. Steig's princess changed from being exceptionally hideous to being exceptionally beautiful, but with a "deep, dark secret" and a Cinderella complex.

Although Elliott and Rossio's adaptation stayed essentially the same during the rewrites, some ideas were discarded. "One aspect that got lost very early on, that was just a fun notion, was the idea that Shrek has a 'handsome spell' put on him," he laughed. "That got lost because it sort of di-

luted the premise that Shrek didn't need to change. It's still a funny idea, though."

As work proceeded on the script, visual-effects artists began searching for the best medium in which to tell the story. Some of the earliest tests used motion capture, a process which closely mimics human movement. "I saw some of the early tests," recalled Andrew Adamson, who used the process on TOYS (1992). "It was very successful for what it was, but it wasn't necessarily right for this story."

He continued, "At one stage, we were experimenting with miniature backgrounds and CG characters. It was something that I had been interested in for a while. I was the visual-effects supervisor on BATMAN AND ROBIN, and we did a lot of combinations of live-action, CG characters, and miniature vehicles. From that point of view, I was interested in what miniatures give you and what you lose and what CG gives you and what you lose. We had picked a couple of artists like Grant Wood and N.C. Wyeth, both American painters, who have this wonderful storybook quality to their imagery, to inspire us. A lot of it is their treatment of light and color. We wanted this complimentary treatment of light and shadow. It's a little similar to what an impressionist artist does. We wanted it to feel like you've stepped into a believable storybook world. So because I've had experience with both CG and miniatures, I had some ideas of how we could achieve that. That got us a long way toward designing the type of world we wanted. However, practically it didn't make sense to do that because you are sometimes tying yourself down. If you're working in a whole CG environment, you can complete an animation and then actually go back and change a camera motion. If you're having to match a computer character to a miniature background, then it's a major deal to reshoot: you've broken down the set and moved on. At the same time, we were doing experiments with CG environments and finding that we could achieve more control over color and light in creating more of a storybook world." At this point, PDI, which was finishing ANTZ, became available.

Thus, SHREK became an all-CG picture. It is unusual, though, in that it explores many diverse environments. "A lot of CG movies in the past have very sensibly been contained environments, where the world is a certain size," remarked Adamson. "In this movie they're going on a quest, so we wanted to create a fairy tale world where it feels like an expansive universe that you've stepped into. We've got trees with leaves blowing around, fields of grass, dragon's keeps, a castle with a tournament with fighting knights and crowds." Creating these environments necessitated technical and artistic innovation (see related side-bars on pages 44 and 48).

Meanwhile, another shift occurred in the project. Chris Farley (SATURDAY NIGHT

LIVE), who had been cast as Shrek, passed away before completing his performance and was replaced by Mike Myers. The filmmakers are hesitant to describe Farley's performance as Shrek, except that he did not play himself and that his Shrek was completely different than that of Myers. Ted Elliott justified the crew's silence: "I worry that people will focus on the fact that Chris Farley was originally cast as Shrek, instead of focusing on the fact that Mike Myers is Shrek, and that his Shrek is what makes the movie work. Shrek has to ground the



**IMAGE MAKEOVER:** When you've got Cameron Diaz voicing your character, sticking with William Steig's original name of Ugly Princess just doesn't seem right. **LEFT:** Eddie Murphy plays the Donkey who just happens to be a wise-a...well...



emotional reality of the story, be misanthropic without being unlikeable, come across as heroic while remaining resolutely an anti-hero, and, of course be funny. Mike pulls it all off, and does an incredible job."

The pre-production was also marked by changes in the crew, which affected the script. Elliott continued, "Terry and I lasted through four different producers and three different directors. Every time somebody new comes to the story, they have to explore and come to understand it so that they own it. Through each of these [regimes], Terry and I were trying to protect these very simple ideas: Shrek doesn't want to change, and he can't want to go be a knight to be liked. Right around the time that [director Kelly Asbury] left the picture, Terry and I saw that we were going to have to do a version of the story where Shrek became a knight, and we just didn't want to do it. And so, at that point we

left the picture because we felt that we were interfering with what had to happen. The story had to be explored in different directions. At that point we hoped, 'Oh man, I hope they come back to the correct story,' which is what actually did happen."

After several directors came and went, Adamson and Vicky Jenson, both first-time feature directors, were finally chosen to helm the project. Adamson began his extensive CG career in his native country of New Zealand and later became an effects supervisor on such projects as the last two BAT-

continued on page 46

**HAVE A LOUSY DAY:** The proportionally-challenged Lord Farquaad (voiced by John Lithgow...and we think we know why the film will be getting a PG rating) ponders how he'll next make life a little grimmer for his subjects.







and filmmakers.  
rs tapped his



MAN films, TRUE LIES, TOYS, and countless TV projects for PDI. Directing a CG-animated feature was not a career goal for him. After being approached about the project and reading the script, though, he became attracted to its message and theme, as well as the technical challenges that it posed.

Vicky Jenson's long and impressive list of credits includes THE ROAD TO EL DORADO, John Kricfalusi's REN & STIMPY, and Ralph Bakshi's MIGHTY MOUSE, "which was really Ren & Stimpy trying to get out through Mighty Mouse's skin," she laughed.

One of the major tasks that they faced was designing characters, particularly Shrek, who went through countless changes. "In CG, which is a very integrative process, designs evolve," noted Adamson. "Sometimes you will do something in clay, and it will work, but when you come to actually articulating that and lighting it in CG, it may look very different.

"He changed weights a number of times. He also had hair sometimes and didn't have hair other times. [In William Steig's original book illustrations, Shrek has hair.] Mike [Myers] is a guy who's very recognizable by his hair and what he does with his hair, so we thought, 'Well, Shrek should probably have hair because that's a characteristic that goes along with Mike.' But we put the hair on him and said, 'He should be a bald guy...' We built the clay model bald so we were used to seeing him that way."

The biggest challenge with Shrek was making him both unattractive and appeal-

ing. "[We did] lots and lots of experimentation," Adamson related. "I'm sure that the character designer, Tom Hefter, did at least a hundred different head sculptures. You work with it, you look at it and get an emotional response, and then you try and analyze what your emotional response is based on, make those changes and come back and look at it again. We had a very patient character designer! To me [Shrek] is like a British bulldog. I think they're cute, and yet they're one of the ugliest breeds in the world. They'll have this ferocious-looking face, and they'll come up to you sniffing and start slobbering and licking you. That's kind of the same thing that we're trying to capture with this character.

"A lot of what makes him likeable is the character that Mike [Myers] plays: he's smart, cynical and at heart sweet. That's one of the themes of the film: don't judge a book by its cover." Adamson also praised Myers's talent for improvisation. "The fun thing with Mike is that you don't really know what you're going to get with him because he can be so many different characters," he noted. "He can change voices, he can change accents, he can change whole personalities. We got in there, and we got a chance to experiment. We tried the character one way, and we actually did a little ani-

mation to his voice that way, and we could see what was working and what wasn't working. We had done a fair amount of animation to a voice with him and showed it to him, and he said, 'You know what? I think I can give you something better.' So we went back into the studio and rerecorded a lot of scenes that we had already animated, and we liked what he did so much that we were quite happy to go back and reanimate some of the scenes."

He described Myers's abandoned approach to the character: "In animation, to avoid being cartoony, you try to find a voice that the actor feels comfortable in, and very often that's their real voice. Cameron [Diaz] was using her real voice. For Mike, we thought initially that approach might work. He was doing a slight accent, but it was pretty much Mike Myers play-

ing the role of Shrek, as opposed to Mike Myers stepping into the character of Shrek, and I think Mike was more comfortable when he really stepped into the character.

"We developed this kind of light Scottish brogue. He's done Scottish before, but we wanted this character to have a down-to-earth blue-collar feel. We wanted him to feel like he sort of belonged in this world but not quite. His parents had moved to Duloc, and he was second-generation Dulocian [laughs]. That gave

him this interesting old-world character in a new world."

Because Myers is such an off-the-wall performer, his voice track was hard for the animators to work with. "Mike's a real interesting one because one of the strongest aspects of his comedy is that he'll often do a facial expression that completely contradicts what he's saying," he laughed. "That's a hard thing to tell an animator!"

Animation supervisor Raman Hui added: "There were times when we listened to his voice, and it didn't sound as exciting as when we looked at the [video reference footage] with Mike. If you just listen to his voice, he might deliver a line and then pause and then deliver another line. If you look at the video, when he pauses that's when he does a weird face or something like that. For us, it's really important to capture that. We did that as much as we could."

Hui contributed greatly to the character of Shrek. The ten-year veteran of PDI actually began his animation career in Hong Kong as a cell animator. While at PDI he animated the first CG Pillsbury Doughboy, a CG

wide, and five-foot deep, and then behind that we used a matte painting that they animated—they did this with multiple passes. There were moving clouds and a waterfall. The set was bound by the parameters of reality, but we enhanced colors on the surfaces of the forms, and we enhanced colors of light. In other words, we took advantage of everything that we could to create this feeling of light and mood on the set. We shot the miniature and matte elements and did a move on them, and then a static maquette of Shrek was comped in. Everybody was very, very happy. Jeffrey [Katzenberg] gave it a '10,' but this was in that development phase. It was decided not to use that and make the film all digital." At that point,

CG features have been relatively localized. "It exists in the 'never-never' time of around the 1200s... so it has a nice feeling of that 'fairy tale' time period," Hegedus said. Art director Guillaume Aretos (ANTZ) added: "The

**YE OLDE BOXES MADE OF TICKY-TACKY:** Even the realm of Fairie has its suburbs (below). **RIGHT:** Co-Art Director Guillame Aretos. **BOTTOM:** Production Designer James Hegedus.



Madonna Inn hotel.

Hegedus was inspired by his first involvement in a CG feature. "I think digital technology is like newborn baby, where you don't know how it will develop... It's a period of filmmaking that hasn't been established, and that's very exciting." **CFQ**

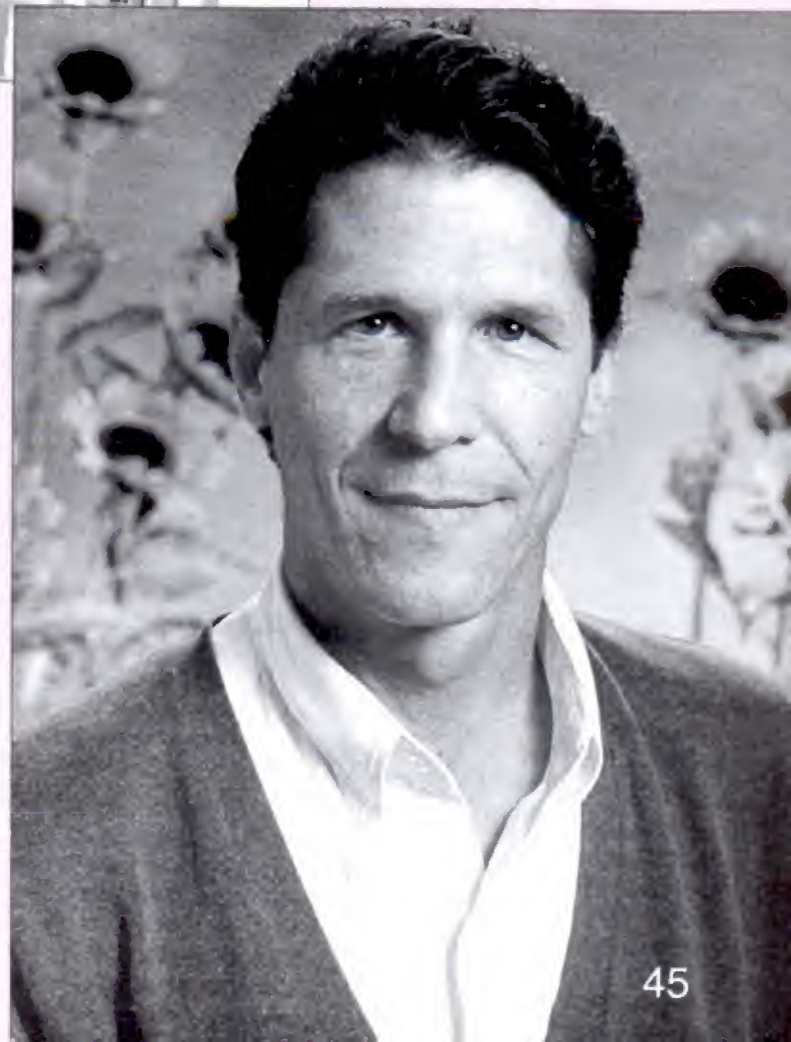
pre-production on SHREK moved from Los Angeles to PDI in Northern California, and before long, Hegedus was asked to production design the film.

Hegedus likened SHREK's production design to a dream, where visual vernaculars turn up, but not necessarily in a deliberate or predictable way. The vernaculars for SHREK included artists such as Grant Wood for his simplification of form, N.C. Wyeth for his complimentary shadows and saturate palette, Norman Rockwell for his character stylizations and skin tones, and countless others. Films included BABE, Errol Flynn's THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD, THE PRINCESS BRIDE, and ROBIN HOOD: MEN IN TIGHTS. Hegedus noted, "I really want to give credit to the people whose combined talents have contributed to Shrek's unique vision."

Much of SHREK's originality is its diversity of environments, whereas previous

base was the middle ages, and at the beginning we were very true to it, but ultimately we did not make a historical movie...For example, the Farquaad castle is built with stones of a castle, but the shape is more from the Third Reich era." Hegedus noted: "When you go by the houses in Duloc around the castle, they're tongue-in-cheek medieval but perfect tract homes! When you get out of Duloc and go into the villages, you go to a rural medieval architecture." For Shrek's swamp, the production designer wanted an environment that reflected the ogre, without being repulsive, a place that children would be tempted to explore.

Other ideas came from discussions between Katzenberg and the artists. For example, Farquaad's bedroom was originally going to be a continuation of the castle's Third Reich look and his



Mickey Mouse for MUPPET\*VISION 3D. He also wrote, directed, and produced the acclaimed short SLEEPY GUY and was head character designer and animation supervisor on ANTZ.

"For Shrek, it took us a while to find the right movements that he should do," he recalled. "He's a big guy, but when we made him move like he was really heavy, then he looked too old. He's maybe 20-something, so we had to make sure that he was still young but in his movements he still showed his weight. He's this big guy, but at the same time he's very athletic, and he can move very fast if he wants to. It took us a little while to find that."

Hui was also charged with making Shrek likeable and repellent. "We found moments to put little [expressions] on his face," he said. "I think that was very important. After he delivers a line he may have a little smile, or after he says something really mean, he might show a little bit of sadness. Those kinds of little things make him more three-dimensional."

Another challenging character to both design and execute was the beautiful Princess Fiona. Adamson explained: "We wanted her to be the most human of our characters, and when I say 'the most human,' we never intended to try and create photo-realism because we wanted more of a photo-surrealism. As we got into working with her, we

used to seeing humans talk on a daily basis, and so small nuances jump out a lot more. That was one of the big challenges, to create a realistic human character throughout the film."

So far, at least one person has been impressed with the results. "When



we first showed Cameron [Diaz] her character animated to her voice, she ran out of the room screaming, and then she came back just laughing," he recalled, laughing as well. "She said it was kind of like watching her sister. She could see gestures and characteristics that were her, and she could hear her voice, but it wasn't her. That to me was the best reaction we could have hoped for."

Adamson regards Diaz's personality as ideal for this atypical princess. "We wanted a tough, down-to-earth character, and that's who Cameron is," he observed. "When we were recording some

animating her we tended to make her really, really feminine, and it didn't really work that well for her because she's a princess, and on the outside she already looks very feminine. When we pushed her to be even more feminine, the character became too stereotyped. In the end we made her more like a normal person, because just from her look she can have a lot of femininity. It was more about getting her down to earth, more like a person living next door instead of a typical princess...She has been kept in the dragon's cave for a long time so she is a princess, but she doesn't know exactly what a princess is supposed to be. She's more like a person than someone with a title to live up to."

Villain Lord Farquaad, who is also hu-  
continued on page 46

**VIRTUAL GENESIS:** Just a few of the not-so-simple steps required to build SHREK's world. From top to bottom: Storyboard; Blocking of camera moves and character poses by layout artist; Character performance added by animators; Final lighting and special effects added to scene.

had to do a great deal of experimentation to find out how real and how stylized she should be—too stylized and she looks like a mannequin, and it's creepy and too real. She doesn't fit into the world of Duloc.

"You can look at a donkey talking, and you can accept a lot because you've never seen a donkey talking before. When you're looking at a human face, you've got to be very, very careful that it doesn't deviate too much from what a human face really does. The average person is



A DreamWorks/PDI Film  
**Shrek**

# Special Effects

## For Ken Bielenberg, Reality is in the Details

By Ross Plesset

During his 10-year stint at PDI, visual effect supervisor Ken Bielenberg has done a myriad of CG projects. His proudest accomplishments include the "Homer<sup>3</sup>" segment for the SIMPSONS' "Treehouse of Horror VI" (1995). Because SHREK is such a recent project,

For skin shading, one of our guys went to technical papers that weren't for computer graphics, but scientific research on how light behaves in skin and he based our skin-shading techniques on those technical papers.

"...I think [Fiona] is just like a Hollywood movie actress. You need to make sure that the female star looks right and

much as possible. Interestingly, depending on how we light Fiona, she can look 'on model' or 'off model.' She's very sensitive to light. There were times when we lit her and did everything correctly, but suddenly her face looked way too round, and she actually didn't look like the same person anymore. We had to go back and change the lighting to get the right shape out of her face.

"There are so many details to creating believable humans and getting the character animation correct. We're all used to looking at humans so if they don't move correctly, you're going to know it."

Bielenberg cited the film's rich and varied environments as his second-biggest challenge. "We had quite a bit more environment than we had in ANTZ," he observed. "This is a road movie; we had a lot of different environments, and each one was very rich as far as grass, trees, leaves, dust, and water. We had to design systems to do all that, and render times would be pretty high. We had lots of different varieties of trees, and we wrote programs for growing trees that allowed us to say how much the branches should droop, how many branches there should be, and as a branch goes out, how often that should create further branches. So, with one system we could grow lots of different varieties of trees."

To add life to the landscapes, the filmmakers animated blowing leaves on the tree branches via the Fluid Animation System (FLU), which was originally devised for the mud and water in ANTZ (and won PDI a Technical Achievement Award in from the Academy of Motion Pic-

tures). "We ended up using that to create flow fields that would drive the motion of the leaves, because when we just moved them randomly, it didn't feel right," he explained. Although most of PDI's technology is proprietary, Maya was used for any flowing clothes in SHREK, while tight-fitting clothes were done strictly in-house.

Because of SHREK's medieval setting, fire is virtually ubiquitous in the film: from torches to candles to dragon fire. "Fire is to SHREK what water was to ANTZ," he observed. "Traditionally fire has been done using live action elements, but we wanted full control over the motion of the fire. For the dragon scenes, it's an important feature in the shots, and we needed to be able to art-direct what was happening. If we shot [live action] elements, I think we would have been bound to what was happening in the elements. I think live action elements might have taken you out of the style." As reference for the film's diverse forms of fire, Bielenberg's team turned to BACKDRAFT, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, DRAGONHEART, and torches from Olympic opening ceremonies. Different rendering techniques were used for different types of fire. For candles, they mapped live action elements onto simple polygons, and for everything else they composited various elements, including simulated spheres and particles, created deforming models, and rendered elements.

It remains to be seen how the public will react to SHREK as a whole, but it promises to be a fantastic showcase of artistry and cutting-edge CG technology.

CFQ



**RUNNING HOT:** Specialized fire routines were developed to add realism to SHREK's dragon sequences.

Bielenberg cannot point to any favorite achievements in it, however, one of the main challenges was creating believable humans, including Princess Fiona and the more stylized Lord Farquaad. "We had to find the right balance between a photo-real character and a cartoon character," he noted. "We have a fair amount of stylized photo-realism in our film, and we needed to make sure that the characters worked within that realism.

"Rendering skin is pretty difficult to do because skin has a lot of translucence, and when light enters skin it bounces around, hits bone and reflects back. It has a much different feel than when you're rendering metal, plastic or other solid surfaces...

glamorous, and so the lighting is very important. To start with, we brought in a Hollywood makeup artist [Patty York], who gave us a demonstration on applying makeup and what was important and how you highlight different features in the face. You want to make sure you accentuate the cheekbones and take a little bit of white and red and use that to swoop up over the forehead so that you highlight the right features. We used that to influence the way we were painting her textures.

"Then we studied Hollywood lighting and how you light an actress for a live action film. [Both ELIZABETH and DAYS OF HEAVEN were reviewed.] We mimicked that as



man, presented his own challenges. "John Lithgow is an amazing talent," enthused Adamson. "For a villain, he can instantaneously go from an insidious whisper to a bellow that just about blows out your microphone. We were taking this incredibly big voice and putting it into a character that's four and a half feet tall [laughter], which was tough for the animators. On the fifth time we animated to his voice, we were still saying, 'This doesn't work!' We had to put a lot more chest movement in and throw his head around. We learned a lot of lessons there for getting a huge, dynamic voice out of a little guy."

Neither Hui nor Vicky Jenson could liken Farquaad to any other animated villain. "I think he's pretty unusual [in that] in animated movies the villains are usually big or threatening, but if this character were sitting next to you, you wouldn't find him that threatening—you would probably find him more annoying," laughed Hui. "We have a very refined villain who is just obsessed with perfection. He's very polite in his dealings with Shrek, but it doesn't make him any less scary."

The design of Shrek's side-kick, Donkey, evolved over time. "The challenge with the donkey was to find out whether he should be more like a human or more like an animal," stated Hui. "At one point we were thinking that he could be standing with two legs and gesturing with his front legs. We tried a little bit of that, but we realized that we really wanted to keep him more like a donkey. He might use his legs to help his performance, but he moves more like a donkey than a person. He's just a really fun character to animate, and Eddie Murphy's voice was just so much fun to work with. Of all the characters, he was probably the easiest one for us to get right. After you see him in one or two sequences you probably won't even think of him as a donkey. He's just a character...He's somebody who won't stop bugging you until you give him what he wants...Once you're his friend, he really supports you, and he would do anything he could to make you happy—sometimes he tries too much."

Adamson thoroughly enjoyed working with Eddie Murphy, who voiced Donkey. "He is an incredible improv artist," he remarked. "You pitch him the scene, he gets in front of the microphone, and he just becomes the donkey. He takes any line that you've written and makes it his own and turns it around in a way that only Eddie Murphy can play it."

From a technical standpoint, the biggest challenge with Donkey was rendering his fur, a job that fell to visual effects supervisor Ken Bielenberg (ANTZ). "We wrote a special shader for dealing with Donkey's fur and came up with techniques for how to comb it so that it's facing the right direction in the right areas and color it," he said. "We ended up using that same fur shader for lots of

things: we actually used it for growing grass, putting fringe on Shrek's clothing, we used it for eyebrows, facial hair and all kinds of things."

Throughout the making of SHREK, Dreamworks co-founders, Jeffrey Katzenberg and Steven Spielberg, gave their creative input, and as a first-time director, Adamson was ecstatic to work with them. "The great thing about [Jeffrey] is that he's a creative partner that also controls the purse strings," he enthused, laughing. "That's the best creative partner to have! He's a real collaborator, and he's always willing to spend the time and the money to make it right. When Mike [Myers] wanted to go back and redo some of his voice work, Jeffrey was the first one to step up to the plate and say, 'Let's do it.'"

"Steven has been involved in pretty much everything in some way. He's been able to come to screenings and give us notes, which is just fantastic. In a couple of cases he liked some jokes, and he wanted to play them up. There was one specific shot we had where the dragon chases the donkey and Shrek out of the castle, and we end with the dragon kind of moaning and moping. At this point we wanted some sympathy for the dragon. He said, 'You know, if you add one more shot of the dragon sitting on the edge of this precipice whimpering, you're going to just tug on the audience's heartstrings for the dragon.' We put the shot in, and sure enough, he was exactly right. It's a classic shot."

Virtually every aspect of SHREK reflects its alternative slant on fairy tales, including the eclectic music track. "Relatively early on I was working with Sim Evan-Jones, the editor, and we kind of knew that we wanted it to be different from a lot of animated films," Adamson recalled. "So we started playing around with some contemporary music. We ended up with a very eclectic mix of music throughout. We would just come in with piles of CDs, put up a scene and see what



**FANTASY IN NEED:** A star-studded cast of fairy tale characters rely upon Shrek to win them back their homes. **BELOW:** Concept art of a dragon attack.

worked. We have everything from John Cale to Joan Jett to Smash Mouth to a new group called Lifehouse; we have Neil Diamond's "I'm a Believer," as well as a score written by Harry Gregson-Williams and John Powell (ANTZ) that's this beautiful fairy tale score that sometimes juxtaposes things."

Because SHREK is such a non-traditional fairy tale it appeals to diverse age groups. "It's going to be PG," stated Vicky Jenson. "We tested it with little kids and older kids that don't usually go to what they would call 'cartoons,' and the older kids loved it, probably because of the wry humor."

"We just wanted to let the air out of some of these old-fashioned ideas of what little girls are supposed to be and what makes up a hero," she concluded. "After so many years of fairy tales about little girls growing up to just marry their prince, even after saying, 'We're modern women ready to stand,' in the end, all they end up doing is leaving their father's castle and moving into their husband's castle."

"The world is not that simple. It takes a lot more to be a human being and to be in a relationship...It's also learning a sense of self-worth and acceptance of other people. All of that sounds very heavy, but we've wrapped it all up in a really fun movie that isn't an empty comedy." CFQ



# The Truth About

# THE BIRDS

## What Did Hitchcock Have In Mind? Can You Say, "Hello, Mrs. Bates?"

By Dennis Kleinman

In 1963, Alfred Hitchcock created one of the greatest mysteries in movie history. Unlike other mysteries where the solution is revealed just before the credits roll, this one he left unresolved. For almost 40 years, it has continued to be a subject of debate among scholars and film buffs.

The movie that Hitch had created was *THE BIRDS*. The mystery: why are the eponymous birds behaving the way they are: attacking children, killing a farmer and a school teacher, wreaking havoc on a gas station? Unlike *PSYCHO*, the movie he made just prior to *THE BIRDS*, Hitchcock doesn't tie up all the loose ends into a neat little package. The house lights come up, the VCR starts to rewind, and viewers are left to work things out on their own.

If this was the work of a less-talented filmmaker (*ATTACK OF THE KILLER SHREWS*, say), no one would bother trying to find a thematically satisfying motive behind the title species' sudden lust for human

blood. The shrews are doing what they do in order to scare the audience, period. But there is one thing about Hitchcock that film aficionados agree on: whether they love or hate him, he is never gratuitous. Every scene, every line, every frame has its purpose, and serves as an integral part of a coherent cinematic whole.

There is little question, then, that these wrathful wrens, killer crows, and homicidal herons mean something. Much ink has been spilled trying to pinpoint exactly what. In *Hitchcock Revisited*, Robin Wood sees them as reminders of the frailty of human existence, and that "...life is a matter of beating off the birds, and the only (partial) security is in the formation of deep relations." In an interview he did with *American Cinematique* in 1973, Hitchcock himself claimed that the birds were getting revenge for being "...shot at, eaten, being put in cages." Truffaut and other cinematic heavyweights have also weighed in on the subject, each doing a variation on either the "nature rebelling" or the "tenta-

tiveness of human relations" theme.

While these may be adequate, even satisfying themes in the hands of some directors, this would be the only film Hitchcock ever made where the basic materials he was working with were as nebulous as this. Thematic concision, ruthless probing of character, and narrative rigor are what drive Hitchcock's best work, and *THE BIRDS* finds him still at or near the top of his game. Another problem is that they have no connection whatsoever with the theme that Hitch returns to again and again throughout his career: the ordinariness of evil. Traitors who play with their grandchildren, kidnappers who run church services, murderers who serve you milk and sandwiches. These are the ironies that make thrillers "Hitchcockian."

But if none of those themes will cut it, does this mean that the mystery of *THE BIRDS* can never be solved? Absolutely not. Leaving aside what he claimed in later interviews, I believe that Hitch left explicit cinematic clues to solving the

mystery. The trick is that the most revealing of these clues lies not in *THE BIRDS*, but in its immediate predecessor, *PSYCHO*.

On the surface at least, the two movies could not be more different. *PSYCHO* is shot in black and white, claustrophobic, and with a stark, expressionistic score. *THE BIRDS* is in glorious color, panoramic, and has no score whatsoever. The characters also seem to have little in common. For one thing, there is nothing even closely resembling a knife-wielding, cross-dressing maniac in *THE BIRDS*. And while it's true that Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) and Melanie Daniels (Tippi Hedren) are both icy Hitchcock blondes, Marion is a working class fugitive from the law, while Melanie is a wealthy heiress whose "criminal" activities consist of a few sophomoric pranks. In fact, all of the inhabitants of and visitors to Bodega Bay are surprisingly normal (one-dimensional, according to some critics), compared to the desperate edge-dwellers of *PSYCHO*.

A closer look, though, reveals some striking similarities. Mitch Brenner (Rod Taylor), like Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins), has a complex relationship with his mother, and much screen time is spent discussing it. One could argue that there is nothing unexpected in this. Hitchcock's films are full of unpleasant examples of motherhood. There's Robert Walker's ruinously over-indulgent mom in *STRANGERS ON A TRAIN*. There's Cary Grant's ditzy mom in *NORTH BY NORTHWEST*, so caught up in her own frivolous concerns that she's unaware that her son is about to be murdered. There's Claude Rains's sinister spy-mom in *NOTORIOUS*, who insists that he poison his own wife.

Mrs. Bates certainly fits in nicely with this crowd. The ultimate possessive mother, she has literally taken possession of Norman's mind, ordering him to kill any icy blonde that she considers a threat. But what of Mitch Brenner's mother, Lydia? As played by Jessica Tandy, she is a remote, fragile little woman with a tense, haunted expression. She has raised a successful son and has a spirited, young daughter (Veronica Cartwright). She runs a farm, shows concern for the neighbors, serves tea and cookies. Nothing to qualify her for Hitchcock's gallery of maternal rogues.

But for a sweet little old lady, Lydia does seem to occupy a lot of psychic space in Bodega Bay. Mitch and Melanie walk on the beach and talk about the problems they have with their mothers, Mitch insisting that his problem is far worse than Melanie's. Bodega Bay's schoolteacher, Annie Heyward (Suzanne Pleshette), tells Melanie how difficult it is for

any woman to get close to Mitch, and implies that Lydia is the reason.

So, despite their differences in temperament and corporeality—Norman's Mom is dead, remember—it turns out that there are some interesting parallels between Mrs. Brenner and Mrs. Bates. Both want to hold on to their sons, and both are willing to fight hard in order to do it. An Oedipal triangle, with a possessive mother at the apex, is the basic character configuration in both movies.

**AVIAN RIOT:** Popular opinion posits the attacks of *THE BIRDS* as a symbolic representation of nature's revolt against humanity. But is there a more immediate, and more human, motivation for the violence?



There is one other parallel between the two films that is worth noting. Like *THE BIRDS*, *PSYCHO* is loaded with birds and bird imagery. When Marion drops by Norman's office, it is filled with stuffed birds of prey, all positioned as if they are about to attack her. At one point, Norman compares them to his mother saying, "Mother is as harmless as one of these stuff birds." (Mother. Birds. Hmmm.) The ultimate realization of this mother-bird connection comes just a few scenes later when Marion is attacked in the show-

er, a knife like a beak jabbing into her flesh while the soundtrack is filled with high-pitched screeching. When Mrs. Bates attacks, she attacks as a bird.

Now for the million dollar question: if Mrs. Bates attacks her enemies as a bird, might not Ms. Brenner do the same? Could Lydia be behind the bird attacks?

The answer is an emphatic "yes!" Not only does the Lydia theory fit with the thematic material Hitch had been working with in the years prior to making *THE BIRDS*, it also gives the movie a coherency and psy-

chological richness that it completely lacks otherwise. And while it does imply some supernatural forces at work, the effect is the exact opposite of what you might expect. By connecting the bird attacks to the feelings of a single character, it brings the movie down to a very human scale, putting human relationships front and center, while exploring a theme that was particularly resonant at a time when irrational forces seemed to be driving the world toward nuclear holocaust: the destructive power of unbridled human emotion.

Interestingly enough, Hitchcock was not the first to explore the terrifying possibilities of destructive passions let loose on an unsuspecting world. Fred Wilcox's 1957 classic, *FORBIDDEN PLANET* had a science fiction setting but covered very similar ground. In that

movie, the parent in the Oedipal triangle is a father, Morbius, who, through his mastering of "Krell technology," can create things by way of thought alone. Unfortunately, when a handsome young officer (Leslie Nielsen) catches the eye of his daughter Altera (Anne Francis), Morbius's id conjures up a fearsome creature to destroy the intruder, a creature that Morbius has no control over and eventually—in the classic sci-fi manner—destroys him.

Lydia in *THE BIRDS* also has the ability to manifest her feelings in the real world, though Hitchcock doesn't bother offer-

ing an explanation as to how. The only "how" that Hitchcock is ever interested in is how the situation impacts the character. In the case of Lydia, the terrible forces that she unleashes are tearing her apart. Like the venting of any powerful, destructive emotion, the immediate gratification derived is far outweighed by the damage done, damage that often extends far beyond its intended target. Lydia soon realizes that the birds are acting out her desires, but since she has no control over her rage at Melanie, she has no way of stopping the attacks or controlling the extent of the destruc-

tion, even when it threatens her own family.

Now that we have our theory in place, we can study the text of the film and see how well it suits. As you will see in every instance, it is Lydia's desire to destroy her rival, Melanie, that is being fulfilled by the action of the birds, from the first attack, to the cessation of hostilities in the film's final scene.

Within moments of the movies opening, we become aware that there is something going on between birds and Melanie Daniels. She sees them hovering ominously in the sky above her as she makes her way to the pet shop. Mitch enters, and as they banter coyly, a bird snaps at her finger. The fact that the birds act on Lydia's behalf before she even knows there is a threat is a tough one to grasp, but no more so than accepting that there is a link between her and the birds to begin with. The birds are the physicalized manifestation of Lydia's homicidal desires. For our purposes and for Hitch's as well, that is all we know and all we need know.

Melanie, who clearly has taken a liking to Mitch, decides to bring two lovebirds to Mitch's home in Bodega Bay for his sister's birthday. To deliver them without being seen, she rows them across a lake, leaves them in the house, then rows back halfway across and waits to see the reaction. Mitch finds the birds, spots Melanie and waves. She responds with a insouciant/flirtatious look, and... bam! A gull attacks Melanie. Again, the closer she gets...

Melanie is taken into a diner where Mitch dresses her wound. This is where we meet Lydia for the first time. She is stiff and aloof, and not at all forthcoming towards Melanie. But when the bird attack is mentioned, it clearly registers. "Did you say a bird?" she asks again later in the conversation, as if this had some special meaning for her. Had something like this happened before? Is



**INDISCRIMINATE VENGEANCE:** Even the most innocent residents of Bodega Bay are not immune from attack, but scenes of children in peril may also hold the key to Hitchcock's desire to convey a darker message about the perils of human emotion. **ABOVE:** Storyboard image of the schoolhouse attack.



she already aware of the connection between her and these winged assassins?

While Lydia remains cool towards Melanie, Cathy warms up immediately, begging Melanie to stay for her birthday party the next day, earning Cathy a disapproving look from Lydia who wants to be rid of Melanie as soon as possible. Melanie is non-committal, but says she'll think about it.

Melanie is staying with schoolteacher Annie. They have a long talk in which Annie hints that she had a relationship with Mitch that Lydia somehow managed to break up. As Melanie announces that she's decided to stay, there is a loud "thunk" against the door. When they go out to look, they find a dead seagull that has bashed out its brains in attacking the house. The pattern continues: The instant Melanie makes the decision to stay in the danger zone with Mitch, another attack.

The birthday party: Mitch and Melanie are on the beach nearby chatting about—you guessed it—the trouble with moms. They stroll back towards the party. There is a haunting shot, first of Annie's winsome expression as she watches the two nascent lovebirds together. Then we pan to Lydia, whose expression is something else again—cold, creepy. Suddenly, a bird swoops down and attacks not Melanie, but Cathy, the person responsible for keeping the threatening Melanie in Bodega Bay by inviting her to the birthday party. Lydia's rage is finding new targets, closer to home.

The bird attacks continue, increasing in intensity as Mitch and Melanie grow ever closer. The story continues to focus on Lydia, though, as she struggles with the knowledge that she is the source of the attacks but doesn't have the necessary emotional control—or perhaps even the desire to prevent them. When viewed from this angle, Jessica Tandy's performance, which some critics found uninteresting, becomes extraordinary, portraying in a few formal words and some intense facial expressions the war that is raging within her, one that is every bit as monumental and devastating as the one going on around her.



**THE TRIANGLE AGAIN:** Central to *THE BIRDS* drama is the tense interplay between Mitch Brenner (Rod Taylor), his mother Lydia (Jessica Tandy, at right), and impetuous heiress Melanie Daniels (Tippi Hedren). Ample evidence suggests, though, that this tension goes to the very heart of the film's mysterious events.

Nowhere is Lydia's internal conflict brought home with more force than in the scene at the Fawcett farm. If Lydia has nothing to do with the bird attacks, the scene with the dead farmer is a straightforward Grand Guignol. What gives the scene its emotional impact is that Lydia, who experiences this ghastly scene alone, knows that she is the one responsible, that it is her rage that is causing the bird attacks, and that her friend, Farmer Fawcett has had eyes torn out because of her all-consuming desire to destroy Melanie. There lies the real horror.

In the scene that follows, Lydia is lying in bed recovering from her ordeal, while Melanie nurses her. Lydia says that she doesn't know how she feels about Melanie, an indication that she might be starting to soften a bit. She asks obsessively about Cathy's safety, saying how concerned she is that the birds might attack the schoolhouse. She knows whereof she speaks. Her rage at Cathy for becoming attached to Melanie, one more sign that she is being displaced by the newcomer, apparently hasn't subsided, and because of it, she is a threat to the safety of her own daughter! Melanie promises to go to the

schoolhouse and make sure all is well.

There is a major attack on the school, followed by an even bigger attack in town. In both scenes, Melanie is at the center, climaxing in her being trapped inside a phone booth with the birds crashing in at her on all sides. Later, she and Mitch discover that birds have taken another victim. Poor Annie, Lydia's other rival for Mitch's affection, has been pecked to death.

Back at the house, the Brenner's and Melanie sit in silence, exhausted and emotionally depleted, waiting for the next attack. Lydia sits alone in the corner, lost in her own thoughts. Cathy asks what is making the birds attack people. There is a moment of silence. Then, as if in response, Lydia slowly rises to her feet. This is as close as Hitchcock gets to showing his hand—the question has been asked, and the answer silently given.

At the climax of the movie, Melanie climbs the stairs to the bedroom she and Mitch would share if they became man and wife, representing the ultimate displacement of Lydia. There, the birds finally have Melanie just where they want her, alone

and unprotected. They unleash the full brunt of Lydia's anger upon her, coming within inches of pecking her to death. Mitch just manages to pull her out in the nick of time.

Finally, with Melanie barely clinging to life, Lydia's homicidal urges have been spent. The seeds of acceptance, planted in earlier scenes, start to blossom. She takes charge of dressing Melanie's wounds, and a hint of compassion starts to glimmer in her eyes. Mitch recommends that they get in the car and make a run for it. But there is no need. As they walk to the car, birds, thousands of them, are standing about, no longer on the attack. As Lydia comforts the stricken Melanie, they drive off.

Without the Lydia theory, this ending is enigmatic and, as many critics have felt, unsatisfying. But with the theory applied it is moving, unambiguous, and inevitable. Lydia, whose rage at Melanie for displacing her was the impetus behind the bird attacks, has come to accept the new order of things. The birds, as always, reflecting Lydia's emotional state, are quiescent. The Oedipal struggle is resolved.

And so is the mystery of *THE BIRDS*.

CPW

# Special Unit 2

*Humanity's Last Line of Defense  
Against Supernatural Evil Can Be  
Found in—Surprise!—Chicago.*

*By Dan Scapperotti*

What do you do when confronted by a Samurai mummy? What happens when your stockbroker turns out to be a werewolf? These and other timely questions will be answered on UPN's new prime-time show, *SPECIAL UNIT 2*. Chicago police officer Kate Benson's intuitive powers lead her to several weird occurrences, including seeing a sea monster rise up out of Lake Michigan and capsize a barge. Her superiors are less than amused. When people begin disappearing, Benson figures out where the next abduction will occur. Abandoned by her partner who thinks she's crazy, Benson follows a little girl into a deserted building. Suddenly a stone gargoyle attacks them. Benson's bullets have no effect on the creature. A stranger comes up behind her and blows the critter away with a weird weapon. A second gargoyle grabs the girl and flies away.

When her precinct commander tries to have her committed, he is shocked to learn that she is being transferred to Special Unit 2, a top-secret branch of the Chicago Police Department. This division does for the Windy City what the Men in Black do for the rest of the country: protect citizens from the otherworldly monsters and demons that

prowl the streets, all the while keeping the populace ignorant of their presence. Soon Benson finds herself teamed with the mysterious stranger who turns out to be detective Nick O'Malley, and on the trail of the stone monsters.

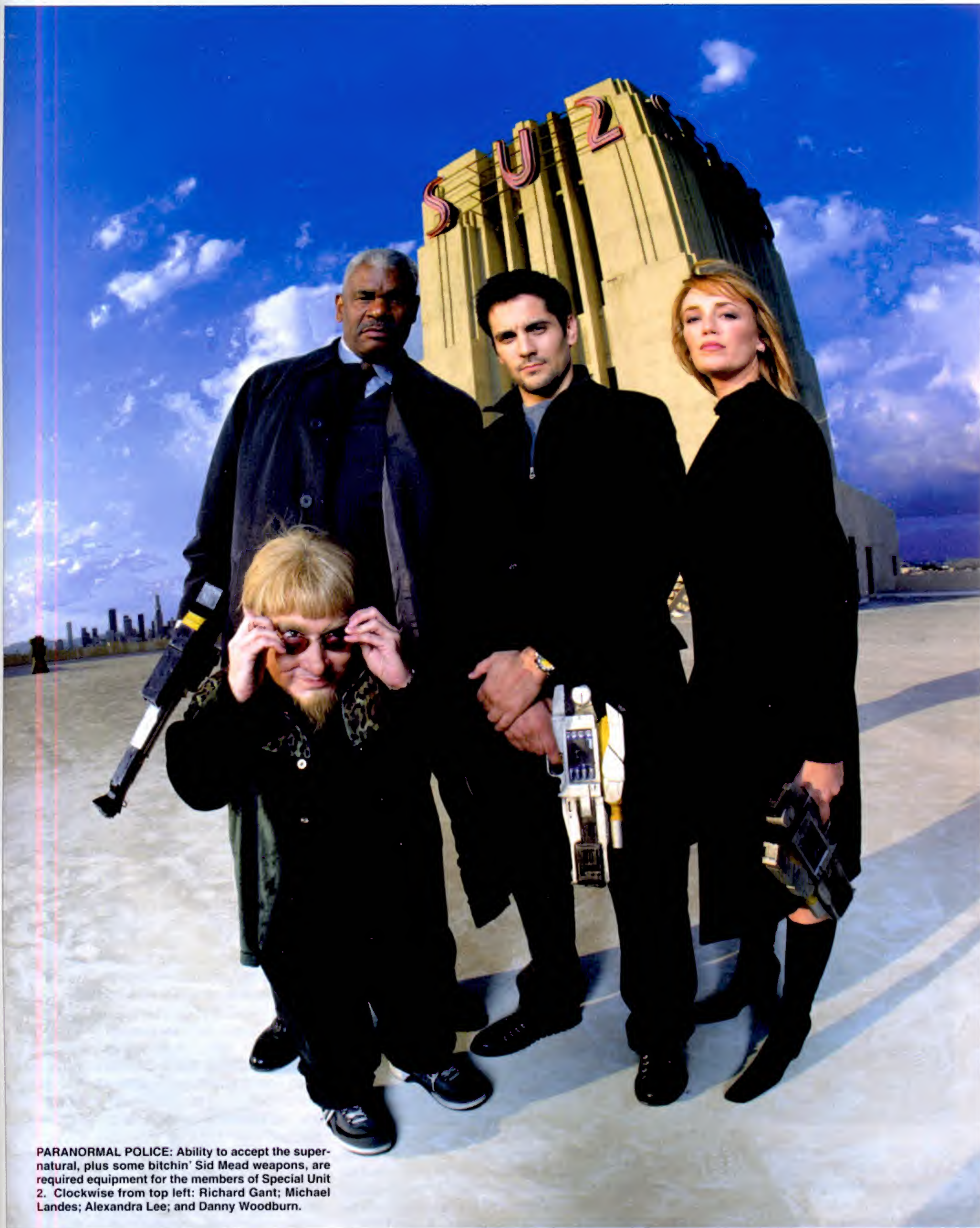
*SPECIAL UNIT 2* is the brainchild of executive producer Evan Katz, who created it and heads the team of writers. A pilot had been developed for Fox a couple of years ago, but the network failed to pick up the series. When UPN ordered a six-episode run as a mid-season replacement, Katz revised the pilot and recast some of the characters.

In an effort to give the series a sleek look, Katz hired Sid Mead, who had designed the weapons for *BLADE RUNNER*, to give high-tech firepower to O'Malley and Benson. For the original pilot, Stan Winston created the creatures, but animatronic and puppet creatures proved a budget buster for the series. "They were not a good value for our dollar," Katz explained. Patrick Tatopoulos, who designed *GODZILLA* for Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin and was the production designer on *DARK CITY*, was brought in to design the monsters for *Special Unit 2*. "He not only did the creatures for the show, but also the production design," Katz ex-

plained. "He did a great job. We had a high-end group attempting to do the show on a TV budget."

Each of the initial six episodes features a different monster. Tatopoulos came up with some unique designs: "The first episode is the Gargoyle that looks pretty good," said Katz. "The second episode is a Samurai mummy, a kung-fu-fighting mummy. He did the design on that. In the third episode there are stockbroker werewolves, so he did his take on the werewolf, which is cool. Fourth there are spider-women, for want of a better word. There are great legs bursting out of their backs. We used a little CGI, puppetry, and blue screen there. You can't even tell that the effects are effects most of the time. For the fifth episode I wanted to go a little original with something we've never seen before. I have a creature made up of human fat that has been illegally disposed of from liposuction clinics. He's a lumpy, gross, disgusting, sad-looking thing. The last one is a male equivalent of a mermaid who sucks the life-force out of virginal sorority girls."

The shows also feature peripheral creatures, including Carl, the gnome who is in every episode. Another is a paid informant called a Herkamer that is basically a head in a box. Then there's the gossamer fairy.



**PARANORMAL POLICE:** Ability to accept the supernatural, plus some bitchin' Sid Mead weapons, are required equipment for the members of Special Unit 2. Clockwise from top left: Richard Gant; Michael Landes; Alexandra Lee; and Danny Woodburn.

"She looks like a barfly sitting in the corner of a bar at two in the morning," said Katz. "A chick with pointed ears. She's pretty funny. The show's a mix of action and black humor, which you don't get on television—at least right now—with really fun, accessible creature, scary stuff."

Heading the cast as hotshot detective Nick O'Malley, whose job is to protect the city from the Links—the terms used for any of the otherworldly creatures that inhabit the dark recesses of Chicago—is Michael Landes, who had appeared on the first season of *LOIS AND CLARK* as cub reporter Jimmy Olsen. "The character names are purposefully generic," said Katz. "I didn't want to do Fox Mulder or anything like that. I wanted to be careful not to copy the *X FILES* or step on that show's toes. So there's no skeptic-versus-cynic sort of relationship. Instead, I went more for one person who is the wish-fulfillment character, who says and does what everyone wishes they could say and do—someone who is a loose-cannon. I wanted him to come from a place of generations of loose-cannon cops, but one who could bring a sarcastic, fun edge to it. Michael is terrific at that. He and I have an eerily similar sense of humor to the point where we'll frequently finish each other's sentences. People are scared watching us sometimes. He got hurt quite a bit during the filming of the show with the stunts, but he survived."

Alexandra Lee plays Kate Benson, who is thrust into a world of mutants, links, and monsters. The actress has been performing

LAUGH, puts a new twist on the *Cyrano de Bergerac* story as Lee gains fame and the affection of the hero by using her comedic friend's material. "She's likeable, sexy, and accessible," Katz said of the actress. "For her I went with someone who's more of the voice of reason, the voice of the audience, more brain. The more accessible and the more 'normal' she was, the further we could push O'Malley in terms of being rude and shooting first and asking questions later—and beating up his co-star, Carl."

The unit's chief informant is Carl, a gnome whom Captain Richard Page introduces to Benson by pumping 12 slugs into his body, ruining a perfectly bad shirt. Danny



**STONE NEMESIS:** A Patrick-Tatopoulos-designed gargoyle served as *SU2*'s first adversary, soon to be followed by spider women and white-collar werewolves.

since she was seven years old and danced with the New York City Ballet. She appeared as Callie on *PARTY OF FIVE* and was recently seen in *WHAT WOMEN WANT*. Her latest TV movie, *THE LAST*

Woodburn, who played Kramer's friend Mickey, on *SEINFELD*, was cast as the diminutive creature. "He's a great comic actor," said Katz. "I first saw him on *SEINFELD*. He's really funny. When I wrote

the role I wrote it for Danny. He originally passed but we worked it

out and he's become an incredible asset to the show. Basically I decided I wanted to do the gnome version of Huggy Bear. Carl is their snitch but he also has a larcenous soul. Because he's theoretically not human we can do horrible things to him, or he and Michael can do terrible things to each other, and it's more acceptable. It's our more politically incorrect humor that becomes more acceptable when Carl's not human."

In charge of Special Unit 2 is Captain Richard Page, played by Richard Gant. When Page recruits Benson, he sums up everything when he says, "The monsters of every child's nightmares are the missing





links. That's why every culture has the same fairy tales about the same creatures. Virgin-loving dragons, 200-year-old trolls. They're all real, except vampires; complete and total fiction. I never heard of anything so ridiculous in my entire life. I don't care if it creeps, slithers, or exists in the ether. If it's something the rest of the world doesn't understand or acknowledge, this unit deals with it. We call everything that's not man or beast 'links.' These things love Chicago, don't ask me why. I wish they didn't."

"Richard has got a whole list of straight credits and then he'll do wackier stuff," said Katz. "I don't know where that performance comes from but it's brilliant, a wonderfully twisted performance."

Rounding out the cast is Sean Whalen who plays Sean Radmon. "There's always the urban explainer character in these

things," Katz said. "We tried very hard to go against type. Sean is the guy in one of the first 'Got Milk' commercials. He's young and hip and appears in the beginning of CHARLIE'S ANGELS. He doesn't want to be there. He could easily be seen in a skateboard park. As an actor he was told to go as quickly as possible through the exposition because my theory is that the audience really doesn't care. They don't have to hear every word, they only need to get the gist."

Today it's surprising to find a genre program that isn't based north of the border. Katz kept things closer to home by filming in downtown Los Angeles: the main set is the unit's headquarters, which was shot in the city's old *Herald Examiner* building, former home of what had once been a flagship newspaper of the

Hearst syndicate. The precinct is actually the lobby of that landmark building. Famed architect Julia Morgan, who designed the publisher's castle at San Simeon, also designed the Examiner Building. "Tatopoulos went in there and added pieces and lit it," said the producer. "That's what you're seeing, which is great, because you get great production value for the money."

Money. That was one of Katz's main challenges. On a TV budget it was important to get every dollar on the screen. "I wanted to make sure that the audience saw every dollar," said Katz. "The creatures look great, not dull. I believe that unless you're George Lucas, CGI looks like CGI. We didn't want to break the illusion for the audience. Trying to make a show that has action, and creatures, and special effects in eight days is a challenge."

An electrical storm reawakens a Japanese mummy in "The Wraps" episode. The creature has its own plans for world domination, and O'Malley and Benson must stop it. "I wanted to do a mummy show," said Katz, "but we wanted to make something that's was going to be a little weird, a little different and a little twisted, so we made it into the mummy of the most feared samurai warrior who ever lived. That way we could kick everybody's ass. Of course they didn't really have mummies in Japan, because they didn't bury their dead. But, hey what the hell! We hired a Japanese stunt crew for that episode and the others, and those guys were great."

Benson's sister is menaced when a merman begins attacking young women in Chicago in "The Depths." In the episode called "The Waste," Nick not only has to battle a creature created from medical waste, but must make a choice between his personal feelings and his duty to maintain the secrecy of the organization.

"It has a pretty unique and weird tone," said Katz. "I think we'll surprise people. There's plenty of action because I like to blow stuff up. It should appeal to genre fans because we certainly give them enough good creatures and eerie stories and great elements to keep people involved. We also have the fun and the comedy, which is hard to find and harder to do well. But I think we got away with it."

CFQ

# IT'S TOUGH TO BE A BUG

## *Rhythm & Hues Helps Bring a Pixar Eco-System to the East and West Coasts.*

By Ross Plesset

Based on John Lasseter's movie, *A BUG'S LIFE*, Disney's newest 3-D attraction, which recently opened at Disney's California Adventure, represents the state-of-the-art in immersive-invasive entertainment. Disney's *IT'S TOUGH TO BE A BUG!* expands on the mythology of *A BUG'S LIFE* (1998), and combines 3-D CG and physical effects to blur the line between reality and virtual reality.

Michael Eisner suggested the show upon hearing John Lasseter's pitch for *A BUG'S LIFE* in the mid-1990s. Both projects were produced simultaneously. However, *IT'S TOUGH TO BE A BUG!* debuted at Walt Disney World six months before *A BUG'S LIFE* was released, and recently opened at

Disney's California Adventure.

The project was an intricate collaboration between various arms of Disney, Pixar, and CG boutique Rhythm & Hues. "It was amazing to see the elements come together so flawlessly," remarked Kevin Rafferty, a show writer at Walt Disney Imagineering. "This was at the height of story development and production on *A BUG'S LIFE* at Pixar, and they were gracious enough to jump in and help us. Both John Lasseter and our team agreed that all of our new characters could conceivably live in his movie. Every new character we did got his blessing."

Rafferty him-

self wrote the story, which evolved profoundly. "The first draft involved a dating game," he continued. "Flik was the bachelor, and bachelorette number one was a black widow spider and another one was a praying mantis. Michael [Eisner] didn't like it. He said, 'An ant wouldn't date a spider!'"

A subsequent draft was more successful. "We thought, 'Wouldn't it be fun to put on a show demonstrating why we need bugs and how tough it is to be one?'" recalled producer Tom Fitzgerald. "We conceived this

**SYNTHESIZED SYMBIOSIS:** Audiences at the newly opened Disney's California Adventure theme park get acquainted with an amiable tarantula (voiced by Cheech Marin, right), and the "Termite-ator" (French Stewart, below), in the 3-D CG attraction, *IT'S TOUGH TO BE A BUG!*



show as a Broadway-meets-vaudeville revue." This revue quickly gets out of hand when diverse species have trouble interacting, and then nemesis Hopper shows up bent on eradicating the human audience for their crimes against bugs.

In devising the insect performers, Rafferty did extensive research in entomology,

looking for species that would lend themselves to 3-D effects. "Research is most of developing a show," he noted. "I consulted with entomologist Ray Mendez, who described this bola spider that has a lasso and actually lassoes its prey. I created a western 'Yahoo!' character that would lasso all of the flies buzzing around in your face.

promising to get the positions that we both wanted at the same time."

The biggest challenge for Sandrik, however, was rendering CG images for the 3-D medium.



**EARTHY ENTERTAINERS:** Disney Imagineer Kevin Rafferty researched entomology to cast the revue-like 3-D show with a chorus line of bees, plus yuck-factor favorites like a stink bug (above), and a dung beetle (right).

That was one of many acts that got away. There just wasn't enough time to use everything. I whittled the cast down to what I thought were the strongest candidates, including a Chilean tarantula that throws quills at its prey (voiced by Cheech Marin), a stinkbug named Claire De Room, and the good old acid-spraying termite, which I immediately turned into The Terminator (French Stewart)."

All of the new characters were animated by Rhythm & Hues (who also designed them) in Los Angeles, while Pixar, in Northern California, animated Flik and Hopper. Needless to say, this was a complicated arrangement. In one scene a chameleon (animated by Rhythm & Hues) wraps its tongue around Hopper (animated by Pixar). "The chameleon was interacting with a character that we didn't have," noted Rhythm & Hues animator Mike Sandrik (STUART LITTLE). "There was a lot of communication back and forth. We wanted the chameleon to be in a certain place at a certain time, and they wanted Hopper to be in that place. There was a lot of com-

"The Chilean spider (Chili) was tricky to render because he had all of this hair on him," he related. "When all was said and done, it took three to four hours per frame, and since it was a 3-D show, once we rendered him for the left eye we had to do it all over again for the right eye. A 3-D show is twice as much rendering as a 2-D show." Also, because the animators worked on 2-D monitors, a great deal of mathematics and guesswork was involved. "The spider shoots quills toward the audience," he continued. "It's a complete 3-D moment, but the animators were working on their monitors in 2-D. The quills went through several iterations before they looked correct in 3-D."

The spider also typified the difficulty of anthropomorphizing bugs. "It was hard to convey human emotions," he observed, "Because he had eight legs, four

eyes, big mandibles in front of his mouth, and no nose, ears, or hands. We did a lot with his eyes, like making them look angry, sur-

"We picked one that was not so much rotten egg, but earthy. After that experience I couldn't smell anything for a month! The audience loves it."

To further blur the line between the real and virtual worlds, special measures were taken to

make the movie screen an extension of the auditorium. "The audience is supposed to be inside an enormous tree," Rafferty explained. "It's this beautiful space, and it's supposed to look like it's continuing on into the film. Also, since the show is supposed to be 'live,' the film has no cuts or camera moves in it."

Considering

the enormous amount of material in IT'S TOUGH TO BE A BUG! it is surprisingly short: eight minutes. Nevertheless, the attraction pushes entertainment to new levels, building on previous Disney efforts, HONEY, I SHRUNK THE AUDIENCE and JIM HENSON'S MUPPET\*VISION 3D. "It's something that you can't see at home," concluded Rafferty. "You can't just plug in a video cassette and experience this show. It's a complete, theatrical, in-your-face, dimensional experience that combines a whole lot of different elements." CFC

prised, or having them look side to side."

The attraction combines 3-D CG with special lighting, innovative sound systems, in-theater Audio-Animatronic figures, an odor effect, fog, air jets, water spray, and a tickling effect. Throughout the show Flik and Hopper are depicted interchangeably as CG characters and Audio-Animatronic figures. Another character, the stinkbug, appears only on film, but her presence can be smelled. "Tom Fitzgerald and I had to smell about 50 vials of potential stink," said Rafferty.



## Back to a Wilder Noir

By Dennis Kleinman

Some recent articles I've seen in some highly respected publications—yes, there are other highly respected publications out there—have claimed that *narrative is dead*. It died, say these critics, of sheer exhaustion, after a century that saw the proliferation of story-hungry mediums like mass-market publishing, movies and—most ravenous of all—television. Accordingly, audiences now know every possible plot twist, every suspense-building device, every surprise ending. The thrills, if not the spills, are gone.

Every one of these doomsayers should see *MEMENTO*. Made on a shoestring, *MEMENTO* packs the kind of wallop that most big-budget behemoths can only claim in their ad copy. What's even more remarkable is that this wallop derives almost entirely from the highly original, and thoroughly appropriate, way *MEMENTO* tells its story.

Our hero, Lenny Shelby (Guy Pearce), is a man with a troubled past. Compounding that trouble is the fact that he can remember very little of it. Having suffered a traumatic head injury some years back, he can only recall events that have occurred within the preceding fifteen minutes. After that, his mind is wiped clean, and he must reconstruct his life story from snapshots he's taken and notes that he's written to himself (some on scraps of paper, others that he has tattooed right onto his body).

But for someone who has such a tenuous grasp of where he's been, Lenny does have an unshakable sense of where he's heading. The story that Lenny perpetually reconstructs for himself is one that demands vengeance on the assailant who raped and killed his wife and caused the injury that deprived his life of meaning, or, as he puts it, "context." A former insurance investigator, Lenny shows remarkable ingenuity and discipline in piecing the parts of this larger puzzle together, and then communicating what he's learned to the new, memory-free Lenny who will shortly be replacing him.

Unfortunately, Lenny's condition and mission are custom-made for manipulation by creatures less morally motivated. Frankie (Joe



Pantoliano), a cop who seems more like a villain every time he smiles, and Natalie (Carrie-Anne Moss), a drug-dealing waitress balanced between viciousness and vulnerability, are both trying to play the very playable Lenny to their own ends. In one particularly harrowing scene, Lenny searches desperately for a pencil so that he can remind himself of the villainy that has just been revealed to him. Unable to find one, the audience watches helplessly as Lenny lapses into forgetfulness, and accepts without question the villain's newly constructed version of what just occurred.

Combine this story with sharp dialogue, apt direction, and some moody cinematography, and you've got one of the best *noirs* to come out in the past thirty years. But the true genius of *MEMENTO* is the way that it structures the narrative to suit its content. The story is told in short sequences, beginning with the ending sequence and progressing backwards towards the beginning. Through the simplest of means, the director has put the audience at the same disadvantage as the hero—viewers have no access to the past.

The result is unsettling, to say the least. At the beginning of each new sequence, the audience is thrown into a situation that it has no preparation for and little context with which to decipher what is going on. Lenny is being chased by someone we've never seen before. Lenny wakes up to find someone bound and gagged in his

closet. People, places, and things clearly pregnant with meaning mean nothing to us because we have no past associations for them. We feel firsthand Lenny's overwhelming sense of confusion, and root for him all the harder as he thinks, fights, and crashes his way through each crisis. As the movie progresses—perhaps "regresses" is the better word—the audience struggles to attach meanings to what it has already seen, mentally playing back earlier scenes and filling in the context it was deprived of the first time around.

This is not a new device. Carlos Fuentes' novella *Aura* progresses backwards from the death to birth. Even *SEINFELD* had an episode where the scenes were in reverse order. Another show, *QUANTUM LEAP*, got some laughs by always having its hero "leap" into the middle of a story without a contextual safety net.

Closer to where *MEMENTO* lives, *noir* films in general have a strong tendency to begin at the end. *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, which some consider the first of the great *noirs*, opens with Walter Neff, who has apparently been shot, stumbling into the office of a colleague. He proceeds to flick on a tape recorder and tell his story. The movie then rewinds to the beginning and we learn how Walter went from ordinary insurance salesman to liar, murderer, and dead man in the span of a few short weeks.

The two movies have other aspects in common. Both are involved with the murky world of

insurance fraud. One of the key players in *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, Barton Keyes (Edward G. Robinson), is a claims investigator like Lenny, and shares many of his perceptual and analytical skills. More importantly, *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* has a temporal structure that perfectly suits what it is trying to communicate: that corruption inevitably leads to destruction. Whatever happens to Walter during his long flashback, whatever he says, does, or feels, we already know exactly what fate awaits him, because the end has already been revealed to us.

I'm hoping that there is one other similarity between the two films. *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* was vastly influential, its use of retrospective narration becoming one of the touchstones that gave *noir* its distinctive voice, one perfectly suited to the cynical, fatalistic tenor of the postwar years. Perhaps *MEMENTO*, with its post-modern dread of the impermanence of identity, can have the same kind of influence, showing even the makers of big budget behemoths how to breathe new life into tired narrative forms. At least, it should prove that the rumors of the death of narrative have been greatly exaggerated. CFQ

### Memento

Newmarket, 2001. Starring Guy Pearce; Carrie-Anne Moss; Joe Pantoliano. Directed by Christopher Nolan. Written by Christopher Nolan (based on a story by Jonathan Nolan). Produced by Jennifer Todd and Suzanne Todd. Executive Producers: Aaron Ryder and William Tyrer. Cinematography: Wally Pfister. Production Designer: Patti Podesta. Original music: David Julyan. R (U.S.)



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## FILM RATINGS

- Must see
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Fodder for MST-3K

### THE CROW: SALVATION

Director: Bharat Nalluri. Miramax/Dimension, 2001. With: Eric Mabius, Kirsten Dunst, William Atherton and Fred Ward.

Eric Mabius plays Alex Corvis, a young man who is framed for the murder of his girlfriend and sent to the electric chair. No sooner has his charred body been taken to the prison morgue than he's up and running with the Crow's trademark tears burned into his face. Dunst plays the dead girl's sister, who reluctantly teams up with Corvis to unlock truth about the murder.

Although the storyline is routine, director Bharat Nalluri keeps things moving at a frenetic pace, never letting up on the carnage. The limited budget for CGI work is obvious, but this actually works in the film's favor, adding to the

comic book feel. A blaring rock score is inappropriate and distracting.

The DVD release also offers a bunch of extras, including commentaries by the director and others.

●● Dan Scapperotti

### THE LOST EMPIRE

Director: Peter MacDonald. Hallmark/NBC, 2001. With: Thomas Gibson, Ling Bai, Russell Wong, Randall Duk Kim.

One of the most famous characters from Chinese literature is Swin Wu Kung, the Monkey King, famous for riding around on a golden cloud and for fighting with a cudgel magically made from a single strand of his hair. Accompanied by his brothers Zhu Ba Jie (a rake-wielding pig) and Xia Wu Jing (a "monk-spade"-brandishing creature), the Monkey King is the protagonist of Hu Tsen An's fairy tale *Journey to the West (Xi Yo Ji)*, which chronicles the saga of how the three protect Buddhist monk Tang San Tsang during his travels to India to obtain special, sacred scriptures. A staple of Peking Opera and

Asian cinema and television (including such anime series as MONKEY MAGIC and the exceedingly freely-adapted DRAGON BALL), the Monkey King figures prominently in LOST EMPIRE, a foppish and somewhat insulting angle on the classic tale. Thomas Gibson (DHARMA AND GREG) plays Nick Horton, a one time Chinese-history scholar, who's induced by the beautiful Goddess of Mercy, Guan Ying (Bai Ling) to hook up with the Monkey King (Russell Wong) to rescue the original manuscript of *Journey to the West* before the evil Shu destroys it and ends the world as we know it. I'm at Bai Ling's mercy, but nutshell: Gibson was like Greg; Wong should quit martial arts; and the action was poor. Note to producer Robert Halmi Sr: "Why?"

○ Craig Reid

### STREET FIGHTER ALPHA

Director: Shigeyasu Yamauchi. Manga, 2001. Voice Actors: Kane Kosugi, Kazuya Ichijyo, Yumi Touma.

Money and motivation have often been the downfall of the STREET FIGHTER anime series. In previous entries, the creative staff seemed satisfied to try to wedge in as many of the combatants from the video games as possible, storyline be damned. The main problem with this approach was that the projects were such low-scale efforts that genuine, kick-ass action was frequently in short supply.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA (referred to on the DVD as the somewhat peculiar-sounding STREET FIGHTER ZERO) breaks the mold. No one's ever going to mistake this for CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON, but director Yamauchi makes sure that little time passes without another well-choreographed, dynamic fight scene to dazzle the eye. Meanwhile, a tantalizing sub-text in which the characters begin to question their combative lifestyle—it's as if the avatars of a video game suddenly stopped to go, *Hey, what the f...?*—gives the proceedings more emotional heft than we've seen in previous entries. Of course, by the end of the feature, everyone's decided that whaling the tar out of each other is a *great* thing to do, but just the faint towards profundity, plus the lavish mounting, make this an entertaining standout in a frequently undistinguished franchise.

●● Dan Persons

### IT CONQUERED HOLLYWOOD

AMC, 2001. With: Beverly Garland, Roger Corman, Bruce Dern, Sam Arkoff, Dick Miller.

American Movie Classics has

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I'm sure Lucy Lawless would be pleased to know she is among your top 50 [32:6:35 50 *Most Powerful People in Science Fiction*]. I suspect she would be even more pleased if you hadn't referred to her as "Badass Barbarian of the Outback"—New Zealand has no outback. Or as "confined to Oz"—New Zealand is not "Oz"—that's Australia.

You *are* aware that Australia and New Zealand are two separate countries, are you not? And if not, why not? Are you really that geographically ignorant?

June Jay

Junejanu@aol.com

[Aw, hell... Two months on the job and already we've pissed off New Zealand. Point taken—sorry. Okay, who stole my atlas?]

served up a tantalizing documentary on American International Pictures, the studio created in 1954 by Jack Nicholson and Sam Arkoff that churned out low budget films with such exploitation-rich titles as IT CONQUERED THE WORLD, THE SHE CREATURE, and THE VIKING WOMEN AND THEIR JOURNEY TO THE WATERS OF THE GIANT SEA SERPENT. Fans will naturally embrace the documentary, but others will find the AIP story compelling as well. Beside clips from A.I.P. pictures, interviews include Beverly Garland, Sam Arkoff, Roger Corman and others. Surprising is the inclusion of lovely actress Susan Hart. Nicholson divorced his wife to marry the actress, a fact the documentary credits for the eventual breakup of the partnership.

The documentary's flaw, though, is that most viewers will be clamoring for more—54 minutes is hardly time to do justice to this subject. What happened to the Poe films that were released over ten years? "We had to make a number of cuts," explained the documentary's producer, John Watkins. "We felt that there were other stories that we wanted to tell that weren't as familiar to people as the Poe films." Shot over a two day period at Hollywood's Magic Castle, the interviews, although interesting, leave you wanting more.

●● Dan Scapperotti

## CORRECTION

Paul Wardle was the author of the SHADOW OF A VAMPIRE review on page 124 of Vol. 33:1/2.



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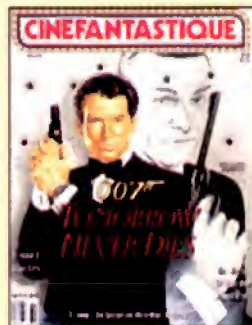
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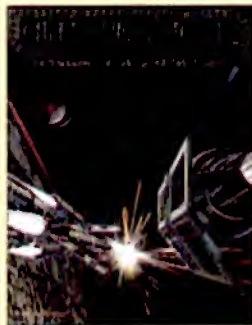
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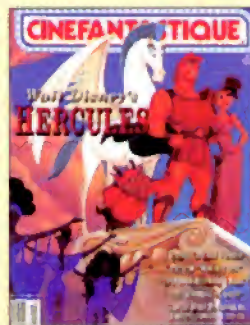
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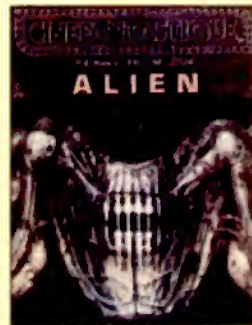
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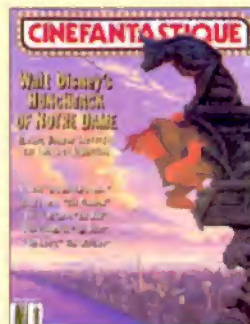
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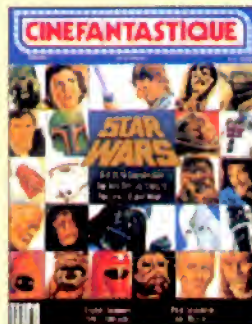
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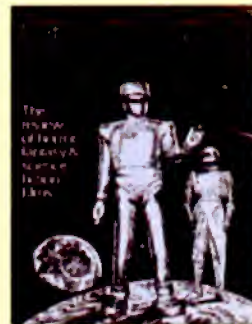
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